

Teaching Methodology

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Preface

According to Richards and Rodgers (1986), the proliferation of approaches and methods is a prominent characteristic of contemporary second and foreign language teaching. To some, this reflects the strength of our profession because teachers can have a wider variety of methodological options to choose from. To others, however, the wide variety of method options currently available confuses rather than comforts. This is partly because methods appear to be based on very different views of language and the way it is learnt.

The goal of this book is to provide an overview of the field of second/foreign language teaching, with a particular focus on issues related to the teaching of English. It provides an overview of foreign language teaching and learning that will, hopefully, enable both prospective and practicing teachers to have a clearer understanding of the relationships between many of the practical planning and instructional activities and their underlying theoretical positions. The author also hopes to create a better understanding of the nature of language teaching and learning and the roles learners, teachers, teaching methods, and teaching materials play in successful language learning.

The book is organized into 13 chapters. The first chapter is a review of the trends of development of the theories of language and learning and the resultant approaches to language teaching. Chapter 2 reviews language and its characteristics. Chapter 3 begins with a

description of human brain and some of its characteristics and then presents some definitions as well as the implications that the knowledge of the brain may have for theories of learning and, subsequently, teaching methods. Each of the chapters 4 to 11 describes one of the well-known methods of language teaching. Chapter 12 discusses factors other than the method of teaching that may affect language teaching and learning. Finally, chapter 13 is a theoretical review of first language acquisition. The reason for its inclusion in this book is that many believe that a better understanding of the theories of first language acquisition provides a clearer picture of second language learning theories and practices.

All of the methods and most of the other materials included in this book can be found in other sources too. They have been gleaned from here and there and organized in what the author believes is a more logical sequence, a much simpler diction, and more pertinent to the needs of Iranian teachers and teacher trainees.

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Part I

Introduction

Chapter 1

Introduction

The history of language teaching has had many twists and turns. More specifically, over the past century, the fortunes of language teaching methodology have waxed and waned. At times, the methods of language teaching were the focus of such a huge surge of interest among teachers and researchers that the period between 1940s and 1980s witnessed the emergence of a multitude of methods. At other times, there was such disappointment about methods of language teaching that some scholars including Stern (1992) proposed a break with the method concept. Others, like Brown (2002), have opted for calling the present conditions of language teaching the '*post-method era*', implying that in the 'changing winds and shifting sands' of language teaching and learning, the concept of method is no longer the central issue.

It is the aim of this book to elaborate on both positions. First, the concept of method and the importance of becoming familiar with language teaching methods will be explained. Then, some of

the most well-known methods of language teaching will be described. Next, to support the idea that 'method' alone cannot explain the differential success of language learners, other factors that influence language learning will be discussed. Finally, some of the more recent theoretical developments in the field of language teaching that have influenced, or may influence, the actual teaching practice at the classroom level will be reviewed.

What is method?

The notion of 'teaching methods' has had a long history in language teaching, as is witnessed by the rise and fall of a variety of methods throughout the recent history of language teaching. Anthony (1963) gave a definition of method that has quite admirably withstood the test of time. He differentiated between **approach**, **method**, and **technique**. According to Anthony, an approach was defined as a set of assumptions dealing with the nature of language, learning, and teaching; only an abstract idea. Method was defined as an overall plan for the systematic presentation of language based on a selected approach. In other words, it was

defined as a way to put the abstract idea into practice. It followed that techniques were specific classroom activities consistent with a method, and therefore in harmony with an approach as well (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

For Richards and Rodgers (1986) method was an umbrella term to capture redefined **approach, design, and procedure**. In other words, Anthony's *approach, method, and technique* correspond to Richards and Rodgers' *approach, design, and procedure*. And the term 'method' for Richards and Rodgers is a broad concept covering the other three. Similarly, Prabhu (1990) thought of 'method' as both classroom activities and the theory that informs them. From among these definitions, Anthony's understanding of 'method' is the most commonly used. We too will stick to his definition. So, the method is defined as a set of theoretically unified classroom techniques thought to be generalizable across a wide variety of contexts and audiences.

Do we have to learn all methods of language teaching?

The proliferation of approaches and methods is a prominent characteristic of contemporary second and foreign language teaching. To some,

this reflects the strength of our profession. Invention of new classroom practices and approaches to designing language programmes reflects a commitment to finding more efficient and more effective ways of teaching languages. The classroom teacher has a wider variety of methodological options to choose from.

To others, the variety of method options currently available confuses rather than comforts. Methods appear to be based on very different views of what language is and how a language is learnt, and some methods recommend apparently strange and unfamiliar classroom techniques and practices. As a cynical commentator once said, "theory is when you know everything, but nothing works; practice is when everything works, but no one knows why. In language teaching, we have combined theory and practice: nothing works, and no one knows why!" Even when this is not the case and methods propose techniques that appeal to teachers, the multitude of the methods and classroom practices they involve prompts inexperienced teachers and teacher trainees to ask, "Which method should I use?" or "Is there a best method?"

A number of scholars have responded to the above questions. Larsen-Freeman (1986) declares that by describing different methods, her purpose is not to convince readers of the superiority of any one of them. She maintains that the inclusion of a method in her book should not be construed as an endorsement of that method. Similarly, Richards and Rodgers (*op. cit.*) hold that when the director of a language school or institution announces that an incoming client group will consist of 45 businessmen requiring an intensive course in spoken English, the teachers will not leap to their feet and exclaim, "Let's use method X" or "Let's use method Y". Questions of immediate concern will focus on who the learners are, what their level of proficiency is, what sort of needs they have, etc. Brown (1987) warns that "however appealing a particular method might be to you as you first encounter it, ... the best method is one which you have derived through your very own careful process of formulation, try-out, and refinement" (p:12). Spolsky goes even further and avows that any theory of second language learning that leads to a single method is obviously wrong.

What all this boils down to is that **there is no single best method**, and whoever thinks you can stick to one way of teaching and achieve viable success is way wrong. Once this is resolved, the next question that crosses the mind of the inexperienced teacher is, "If there is no best method, why do we have to learn all those methods?"

Answer – teachers should familiarize themselves with various methods and techniques because familiarity with those methods and techniques will help them have a clearer understanding of the reasons behind each technique. If they know why certain techniques are used in different methods, they will be better equipped and more likely to make informed decisions; otherwise, they may become a slave to one way of thinking, a puppet without self-control!

The theoretical bases of language teaching methods

Methodology in language teaching heavily borrows its theoretical principles from psychology and linguistics. For this reason, without some knowledge of the relevant psychological and

linguistic underpinnings, the story of language teaching methodology is hardly worth telling.

The study of language and its characteristics is the subject matter of linguistics. Teaching and learning and the theories behind them are in the realm of psychology. Approaches to language teaching emerge as a result of the combination of the theories of language put forward by linguists and the theories of learning delineated by psychologists. Methods are the practical ways of implementing those approaches. To understand why there are so many different methods, and why each method makes use of a different set of techniques, therefore, a brief review of the trends of development in psychology and linguistics (so far as they relate to methodology) can prove helpful.

For ease of explanation and comprehension, we will discuss the trends of development in linguistics and psychology in four periods: before 1940s, between 1940s and 1960s, between 1960s and 1980s, and from 1980s onwards. One must bear in mind, however, that this is only a simplified review for the purpose of the discussions in this book, and does not exhaust all the theoretical developments.

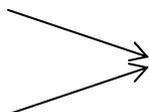
Until 1930s, linguists viewed language and its rules in a way that is now known as the **prescriptive approach**. In this approach, linguists would lay down certain rules for a language, and the speakers of that language had to respect those rules. For instance, by comparing English with some classical languages such as Latin or Greek, linguists would make rules such as 'do not split infinitives' or 'do not strand prepositions', etc. Then, both native speakers and learners of English had to obey those rules. Language was what the linguist thought people should say.

Almost in the same period, there was a traditional view of learning in psychology, known to us as '**faculty psychology**', in which psychologists thought of the mind in much the same way as a body builder would think of muscles. Faculty psychologists believed that the mind is part of the body. Just as you do exercises to make the muscles of your body strong, to strengthen the mind, you need exercises. But not physical exercise; you need mental practice. And language learning was considered to be a good mental practice. They believed that the more you exercised your mind, the stronger your mental

faculties would be; the harder the exercise, the more beneficial.

Since the theoretical views to both linguistics and psychology were traditional, the approach to language teaching was also traditional. Examples of this traditional approach include the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and the Direct Method (DM), which will be described in more detail in the following chapters.

Prescriptive approach
to grammar



Traditional approach :
GTM
DM

Faculty psychology

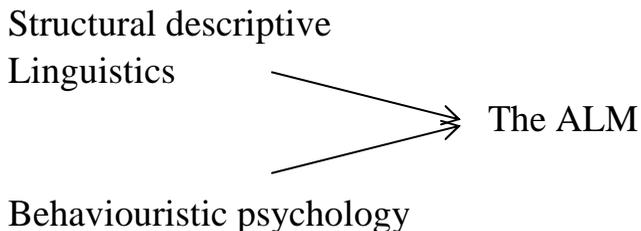
During late 1930s and early 1940s, a new generation of linguists emerged, who criticised the prescriptive approach to language and proposed an alternative approach. The new approach came to be called '**structural descriptive** linguistics'. In this approach, a prominent proponent of which is Bloomfield, it is held that language is a set of structures produced by the native speakers. The essence of this new approach pivots round two

points. One is that language is a finite set of structures which, when learnt, enable the learner to produce an infinite number of utterances. So, the trick to learning a language is to learn those structures. The second central point is that these structures are to be described not prescribed. In other words, the linguist is thought to be in no position to determine and dictate what a large number of native speakers should and should not say. That would be like an astronomer claiming that since he is a specialist and knows more about stars than anyone else, he thinks it would be much better if the sun rose in the west and set in the east. The fact that the sun continues to rise and set the way it has always done regardless of how an astronomer thinks it should, shows that it is the astronomer's reasoning that needs a second thought. In the same way, language was said to be what the native speakers actually say, not what the linguist thinks they should say. The advocates of the structural descriptive approach to linguistics maintained that linguists will do much better if they observe native speakers and describe the structures they use rather than prescribe rules.

Contemporary with these developments in linguistics, the field of psychology also experienced a revolutionary development. Deeply rooted in **empiricism, behaviouristic psychology** was based on the idea that the abstract does not exist; only concrete and observable things are worthy of scientific enquiry. According to behaviourism, then, there was no mind since mind is abstract. If there was no mind, learning could not be mental exercise and needed a redefinition. Behaviouristic psychologists defined learning as an observable change in the learners' behaviour. This observable change in behaviour was to be brought about by **conditioning**, that is, introducing stimuli, eliciting responses, and then reinforcing the desired responses so that those desired responses turned into habits. For behaviouristic psychologists, therefore, human learning was much like animal learning; no thinking, no cognition. Learning was only a mechanical process of **habit formation**. The brain was only a simple link between stimuli and responses. It was viewed as a blank slate or an empty box without any active role in learning.

Putting together the theoretical positions of descriptive linguists and behaviouristic

psychologists, methodologists developed an approach to language teaching known to us as '**Audiolingualism**' or the **Audio-lingual Method (ALM)**.



The advent of the Audio-lingual Method saw the demise of the traditional grammar based instruction. For a couple of decades, the ALM was in its heydays. Teachers in most schools talked about the new method and the enthusiasm it had generated among both teachers and students. However, as the method lost its novelty and the enthusiasm it had generated faded away, it began to fall short of expectations. In the 1960s, when the moon and the stars promised by the ALM proved late to arrive, teachers and educators started desperately looking for an explanation. Eventually, the explanation came from transformational-generative linguists and cognitive psychologists.

The **transformational-generative linguists**, headed by Chomsky, criticised the structural descriptive linguistics and started a theoretical battle against it. The publication of Chomsky's 'syntactic structures' in 1957 was one of the first steps in this direction.

The transformational-generative linguists claim that contrary to the structural descriptive viewpoints, language is not what its native speakers actually say. They differentiate between **competence** and **performance** and hold that what native speakers actually say is performance. Performance is affected by many extra-linguistic factors such as fatigue, stress, sleepiness, drunkenness, etc. Even proficient native speakers sometimes make mistakes in their use of language. **Malapropism** and **spoonerism** are the famous examples of what is usually referred to as **slips of the tongue** (or sometimes pen). The fact that the performance of native speakers is obviously flawed with such slips does not, by any means, indicate that they do not know their language. Rather, there is another abstract, deep-seated type of knowledge which underlies the linguistic performance. It is called competence. It is this abstract linguistic

competence residing in the mind of any normal native speaker/hearer that enables them to make grammaticality judgements about their language. That is why when someone makes a mistake in performance, s/he can correct her/his utterance instantly. That is also why even uneducated native speakers can decide whether or not an utterance or sentence is acceptable in their language. So, competence is constant and invariable whereas performance is variable. To capture the difference between competence and performance, transformational-generative linguists distinguished between **deep structure** and **surface structure**. They maintained that performance is not worthy of being equated with language because it fluctuates too much. Thus, the idea that language is what people actually say was refuted and replaced by one saying that language is the underlying abstract knowledge of the system of language that resides in the mind of any normal native speaker/hearer.

In line with these developments, cognitive psychologists like Ausubel began to attack the theoretical foundations on which behaviourism was based. Unlike the prominent figures in the behaviouristic school, such as Watson and Skinner,

who believed in learning as a mechanical process of habit formation, and saw language as a verbal behaviour, not a mental phenomenon, the **cognitive psychologists** viewed learning as a cognitive process of **rule formation**.

The advocates of the cognitive school avowed that learning in general, and language learning in particular, cannot be explained by habit formation. Littlewood (1984) enumerated the following inadequacies of the behaviouristic approach in accounting for first language acquisition.

1. The basic view of language is no longer acceptable. Language is not merely verbal behaviour. Underlying the actual behaviour that we observe; there is a complex system of rules. These enable speakers to create and understand an infinite number of sentences, most of which they have never encountered before. In other words, behaviourism fails to explain creativity in language.
2. What learners ultimately learn is competence, which is an abstract knowledge. But this is not what they are exposed to. This cannot be explained by habit formation.
3. Rules are often reflected very indirectly in the surface structure of the language; deep relations

cannot be explained by behaviourism. For example, in :

John is eager to please.

John is easy to please.

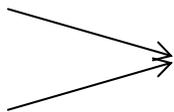
Although both sentences have identical surface structures, the deep structures are different. In the former, John pleases someone, whereas in the latter, someone pleases John.

4. Learning a language is a complex task. However, in natural circumstances, it occurs with exceptional speed. In a couple of years, children master the complex system of language. This would be impossible if they were to focus on each sentence separately and memorize them.
5. Although children are exposed to different actual speech, they arrive at the same underlying rules.

Most of the above mentioned inadequacies also hold true regarding the behaviouristic view to second language learning. Criticizing behaviourism for the above-mentioned inadequacies, supporters of cognitive psychology emphasised that language learning takes place only when learners discover the rules underlying language. The combination of the transformational-generative view to language and the cognitive view to learning led to the development of the so-called **cognitive-code approach** to language teaching to which such

methods as the Silent Way, Suggestopedia, Community Language Learning, and Total Physical Response subscribe.

Transformational-generative
Linguistics



Cognitive-code
Approach

Cognitive psychology

For almost another couple of decades, the field of language teaching witnessed an active period during which a variety of methods were devised, catapulted to fame, gained huge popularity, and then gradually faded away in favour of the newer, more popular ones. Ultimately, in 1980s, the theoretical underpinnings of the cognitive-code approach to language teaching became the target of a new round of attacks that eventually toppled the approach from its throne.

In the linguistic front, the proponents of the **pragmatic** approach (the sociolinguists) criticized the transformational-generative approach on grounds that it failed to appreciate the social nature of language. Remember that in transformational-

generative linguistics language was defined as an abstract knowledge of the system of language (rules) residing in the mind of any *individual* native speaker/hearer. Linguists in the pragmatic school stated that language is not an individual phenomenon. 'By its very nature, the use of language requires a minimum of two persons: one to produce language, and the other to receive it. So, language is a social phenomenon'. Moreover, the context or situation in which language is used greatly influences meaning. For example, the sentence, 'Hi, how is everything, are you OK?' is usually judged by most native speakers of English as quite grammatical and acceptable. But you will agree that the same sentence, when delivered to a professor by a student with a slap in the back does not sound very normal. So, the intuition of native speakers about the acceptability of linguistic forms in isolation is not an adequate criterion of appropriateness of language.

Sometimes, the same linguistic form could have different, even opposite, meanings. Suppose John desperately needs some money. His friend, Bill, has some but he needs it himself tomorrow afternoon. Bill agrees to lend John the money

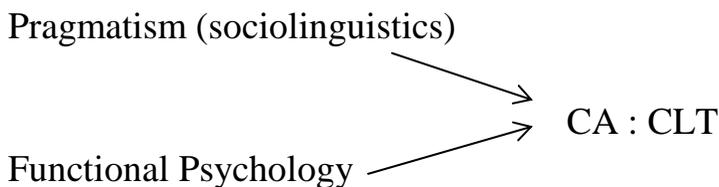
provided that he returns it tomorrow morning. John's response is 'thank you very much'. The next morning, John goes to Bill only to express regret that he can return the money no sooner than a month, leaving Bill in deep trouble. Bill says, 'thank you very much'. You see! They both used the same linguistic form, but when it comes to meaning, what a difference!

According to sociolinguists, language is not what is just in the mind of any individual native speaker/hearer. It is a social phenomenon which becomes meaningful and interpretable only when used in an appropriate context.

Along the same line, the cognitive view to learning was challenged by the **functional** approach, an approach in which it was believed that learning does not mean only the formation of rules; it means the ability to make use of the rules one knows. In other words, in the functional view, the idea is that just knowing something is not equivalent with learning it. Learning occurs when one can do something (perform certain functions) with what they know. Many Iranian learners of English at university level know most of the formal rules of English grammar. They can explain the

details of those rules in Persian, or they may do quite well on a multiple-choice test of English grammar. They may even have a good reservoir of passive vocabulary. But does their knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary guarantee a fluent successful communication? The essence of the functional view to learning is that you can claim you have learnt language only when you are able to put your knowledge to actual communication.

The result of the interaction between the above positions on language and learning was the **communicative approach**. One of the best known methods belonging to this approach is **Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)**.



Here is a summary of the trends of development in linguistics and psychology.

Table 2.1

	Linguistics	Psychology	Methodology
Before 1940s	Prescriptive approach	Faculty psychology	Traditional approach
1940s	Structural-descriptive linguistics	Behaviourism	Audio-lingualism
1960s	Transformational-generative linguistics	Cognitivism	Cognitive-Code approach
1980s	Sociolinguistics (pragmatism)	Functional psychology	Communicative approach

In the following chapters, having first viewed some basic and necessary points about language and learning, each of the afore-mentioned methods will be discussed in further detail.

Part II

Language and Learning

Chapter 2

What is language?

In chapter one, it was mentioned that without some knowledge of linguistics and psychology, the story of teaching methodology is hardly worth telling. Since teaching methodology is based on these two disciplines, a clear understanding of teaching methodology necessitates a review of language and learning. In this chapter, we will briefly study language.

Sounds

The study of language begins with sounds, the minimal distinctive units of language. Languages are made up of sounds, also referred to as **phones**. Phones are of two kinds : **phonemes** and **allophones**. Phonemes are the phones that are distinctive, that is, they can change the meaning of the word in which they are used. The only difference between the words '*fat*', '*mat*' and '*cat*' is in their initial sounds /f/, /m/, /k/ in such a way that

if any of these sounds is replaced by another, the meaning of the word changes. Allophones are the phones that do not change the meaning of words despite physical differences in their articulation. For instance, in Persian, there are at least two varieties of the phoneme /k/ : the velar /k/, which is much like the English /k/, as in /ku:r/ (blind) and the alveopalatal /k'/, which is absent in English, as in words like /k'ær/ (deaf) or /k'ælæm/ (cabbage). If a learner of Persian uses one variety where the other variety is normally required, for example says, /k'u:r/ or /kælæm/, despite the obvious difference in pronunciation, the meaning does not change. In such cases, the sound segments /k/ and /k'/ are said to be the allophones of the same phoneme. Allophones are, therefore, the different realizations of the same phoneme.

Both phonetics and phonology are concerned with the study of phones. **Phonetics** is the general study of the physical characteristics of speech sounds whereas **phonology** deals with the system of the relationships between and among speech sounds. At the same time, different branches of phonetics are concerned with the study of the different aspects or characteristics of speech

sounds. **Articulatory** phonetics deals with how speech sounds are made or 'articulated'; **acoustic** phonetics is the study of the physical properties of speech sounds as waves 'in the air'; **auditory** or **perceptual** phonetics deals with the perception, via the ear, of speech sounds; and **forensic** phonetics has applications in legal cases involving speaker identification and the analysis of recorded utterances (Yule, 1996:41).

In articulatory phonetics, which is of primary interest to many linguists, speech sounds are classified into two general classes: **consonants** and **vowels**. Each class is further categorized into subcategories. Two criteria are used to classify consonants: **place of articulation** and **manner of articulation**. On the basis of place of articulation, which refers to the location inside the oral cavity at which obstruction or constriction to the flow of air stream takes place, consonants are divided into the following categories:

bilabial : /p, b, w/

labiodental : /f, v/

dental : /θ, ð/

alveolar : /t, d, s, z, l, r, n/

alveopalatal : / š, ž, č, ǰ/

palatal : /y/

velar : /k, g, ŋ/ and

glottal : /h/

In terms of manner of articulation, which refers to the way speech sounds are produced, the following classes of sounds can be identified:

stop : /p, b, t, d, k, g/

fricative : /f, v, θ, ð, s, z, š, ž /

affricate : / č, ĵ /

nasal : /m, n, ŋ/

approximant or **semivowel** or **glide** : /h, w, y/

lateral : /l/

To describe vowels, two features [back] and [high] are used. Using these two features, we can show whether, in the articulation of vowels, the tongue is raised to a high position or lowered, or just kept at the middle position; or whether the tongue moves toward the front or back of the mouth, or stays in the central position.

Phonology is essentially the description of the system and patterns of speech sounds in language (Yule, *ibid.*: 54). Phonology studies how speech sounds are used together and how they might influence each other when they do so. One aspect of phonology, called **phonotactics**,

determines the definite patterns to the types of sound combinations permitted in a language. For example, if forms like 'tig' or 'mig' are presented to the native speakers of English, they will treat them as possible English words even though they have not encountered them before. But forms like 'fptok' or 'ktp̄er' will be instantly rejected because the phonotactics of English does not allow this way of combining speech sounds. Another aspect of phonology studies the effect of **co-articulation** of sounds. When speech sounds occur in a sequence, they influence, and/or are influenced by, their adjacent phonemes. Sometimes, some aspect of a phoneme might change in order for the phoneme to become more similar to the neighbouring phoneme. This is called **assimilation**. For instance, the phrase 'can go' is pronounced /kæn gəv/ in deliberate pronunciation of each word in isolation. When pronounced together, it will be something like /kəŋgəv/. The alveolar nasal /n/ changes to the velar nasal /ŋ/ in order to be more compatible with the velar /g/. In Persian, we write شنبه but pronounce /شَمبِه/ because the bilabial nasal /m/ is more compatible with the following /b/ than the alveolar nasal /n/.

The opposite of assimilation is **dissimilation**, in which some aspect of a phoneme changes so that it becomes less similar to another phoneme. **Elision** is another phonological process in which the neighbouring phonemes make a sound segment to disappear. As an example, the word '*aspects*' is pronounced /æspeks/ in casual speech; the sound /t/ is omitted altogether.

In addition to phonemes, languages also have **suprasegmental features** including **stress**, **intonation**, and **juncture**. Stress refers to the emphasis placed on a syllable in a string of syllables. Intonation deals with the rises and falls in one's voice. Juncture has to do with the boundary between words, phrases, or sentences (Elgin, 1979). For instance, the utterance, /ənaɪsmən/ could be transcribed in the following two ways, depending on where the boundary is put:

a nice man

an ice man

Morphs

When sound segments are put together, morphs are produced. According to Chastain (1988), morphs, **morphemes**, and **allomorphs** are comparable to phones, phonemes, and allophones. Morphs are units of words. Meaningful units are called morphemes, and the various meaning-carrying representations of a meaningful unit are called allomorphs. The word '*books*', for example, has got two morphemes: 'book' and 's' (meaning more than one). So, the concept of plurality is a morpheme. But it can be manifested in more than one way:

child → *children*

man → *men*

sheep → *sheep*

All the different ways through which words can be made 'plural' are the allomorphs of the morpheme 'plurality'.

Morphemes may be free or bound. **Free** morphemes are those that can stand by themselves and be meaningful, like *boy*, *door*, etc. **Bound** morphemes can only be joined to other morphemes, like the plural 's' or the past morpheme 'ed'. Free morphemes can be either lexical or functional.

Content words like '*door*', '*go*', '*mad*', etc. are **lexical** morphemes while prepositions, articles, determiners, which are at the service of other elements of language, are **functional** morphemes. Bound morphemes are either derivational or inflectional. Bound morphemes such as –er added to verbs to make nouns, or the suffix –ness, that change the part of speech of the words to which they are added are **derivational** morphemes. Those that do not change the part of speech (such as the past morpheme (-ed), or the plural morpheme (-s)) are **inflectional**. The different kinds of morphemes are summarized in the following table:

Table 2.2

Morphemes			
Free		Bound	
Lexical	Functional	Derivational	Inflectional
class, door, boy, etc.	and, but, so, with, etc.	work (v) + er = worker (n)	work(v) + ed = worked (v)

Words

When morphemes are put together, words are formed. Such forms as '*pens*', '*working*', '*active*', and '*nationality*' are words that contain more than one morpheme. New words come into a language in

a variety of ways. Chastain (*op. cit*) and Falk (1978) discuss the following:

1. **Derivation:** one of the most common ways of forming new words is attaching morphemes to bases or other morphemes to produce new words. For example : *person + al = personal*
2. **Coinage** (coining): throughout the history of any language, there are cases when truly new words appear, words that no speaker of the language has ever produced before. In addition, as a result of advancements in technology and the production of new products and the need for words to be used as trademarks, sometimes completely new words are invented. Among the words in English that were probably coined are '*aspirin*', '*nylon*', '*Kleenex*', '*jazz*', '*quiz*', '*Xerox*', '*fun*', and '*snob*'.
3. **Borrowing:** another source of new words is the addition to the lexicon of a word from another language. English seems to be particularly good at borrowing, and has borrowed many words from other languages including *paradise* (Persian), *yogurt* (Turkish), *alcohol* (Arabic), *cheese* (Latin), *samovar* (Russian), to mention just a few.
4. **Compounding:** often two words, such as book and case, are joined together to form a new word: *book + case = bookcase*
5. **Blending:** it is similar to compounding in that two separate words are combined or blended into one

word. The difference between them is that in compounding, two words are joined together in their full form, whereas in blending, parts of two words are blended into one word:

breakfast + lunch = brunch

6. **Clipping:** longer words are shortened, for example, *aeroplane* → *plane* *gasoline* → *gas*
7. **Backformation:** here, a short form is created from a long one on the basis of similarities between the longer word and other words in the language. For example, the word '*editor*' existed in the lexicon of English long before '*edit*'. On the basis of the similarities between '*editor*' and other words in English such as '*worker*', '*actor*', etc., the suffix *-or* was removed and '*edit*' was formed. The difference between backformation and clipping is that in backformation the part of speech of the word changes, while in clipping it does not.
editor (n) → *edit* (v)
8. **Conversion:** a process in which a word is neither extended nor shortened; the same word is used to fulfil a different part of speech in a different context.
Could you fetch me some *water*. (n)
I want to *water* the flowers. (v)
9. **Loan translation** (calque): a way of creating new vocabulary items by translating the morphemes of foreign words into native morphemes. For example, the word '*telegraph*' is made up of two morphemes '*tele*' (far) and '*graph*' (write). These morphemes

have been translated into Persian, producing دورنگار . Another example is the word 'skyscraper', which is translated into Persian as آسمان خراش .

10. **Extension:** new lexical items may be created from proper names when the trade name of a leading brand is used for all brands of the product. For many people, any tissue is a 'Kleenex', or if they want to buy any dishwashing liquid, they ask for 'Rika'.
11. **Narrowing:** is the opposite of extension. Narrowing occurs when an ordinary lexical item takes on a special meaning in addition to its original general meaning. This is due to the tendency to use items already present in the lexicon as names for new products.
12. **Acronyms:** is the result of putting together the initial letters of each word in a phrase, like *IRIB* (*Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting*), UNHCR (United Nation's High Commission for Refugees), ECO (Economic Cooperation Organization), etc.
13. **Onomatopoeia:** is a modified type of coining in which a word is formed as an imitation of some natural sound. Unlike other processes of word formation, the onomatopoeic model is extralinguistic; it lies outside the language itself. For instance, we say cats *meow*, or cows *moo*, etc.
14. **Multiple processes:** it is possible to use more than one of the above-mentioned processes to create new words. As an example, a word may be coined or borrowed and then changed into another word by

adding already existing morphemes in the language. The word "كتاب" was borrowed from Arabic and then combined with Persian words like "سرا" to create "کتابسرا".

Syntax

When words are joined together, larger units like phrases, clauses, and sentences are created. Syntax is mainly concerned with the structure of these units, for instance, how they are formed. Of course, native speakers intuitively know about syntax; they know how to use the grammar rules to create phrases, clauses, and sentences to express their ideas. This intuitive knowledge also enables native speakers to make judgements about the well-formedness of a sentence, that is, it gives native speakers the ability to determine whether or not a sentence is grammatical and acceptable. Every native speaker of English knows that the sentence *'boy the English studies'* is not grammatical.

Native speakers' intuitive knowledge about syntax includes rules that enable them to produce all the well-formed sentences and, at the same time, prevent the production of all ill-formed ones. Another property of such rules is that they are **recursive**, that is, they can be applied more than

once. This property enables native speakers to use a finite number of rules to generate an infinite variety of sentences.

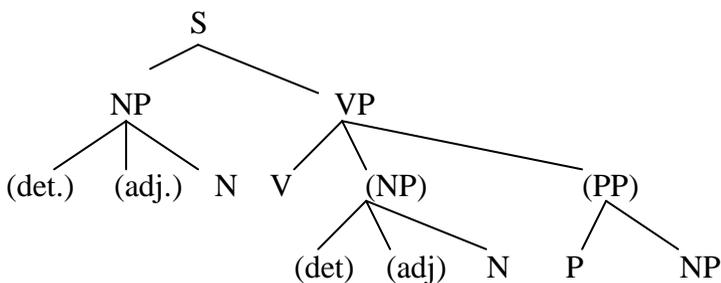
As to the types of such intuitive rules, the transformational-generative linguists, whose description and formulation of these rules are almost commonly accepted, postulate three kinds of rules:

1. phrase structure rules
2. lexical insertion rules
3. transformational rules (transformations)

Phrase structure rules are those that determine the structure of phrases and sentences. They determine the **constituents** of sentences and explain how native speakers generate basic sentence structures. Phrase structure rules include rules such as the following:

$$S \rightarrow NP \ VP$$
$$NP \rightarrow (\text{Determiner}) (\text{adj.}) N$$
$$VP \rightarrow V (NP) (PP)$$
$$PP \rightarrow P NP$$

The above rules can also be shown in the form of a tree diagram:



Once **phrase structure rules** have determined the structure of the sentence to be produced, **lexical rules** apply to indicate the words to be used for each constituent. For example:

Adj. : tall, short, clever, ...

N : door, book, girl, ...

V : go, come, study, ...

etc.

This means that if we need a noun, we can use only one of the words belonging to the N category, not any form belonging to any other category.

Transformational – generative linguists distinguish between deep structures and surface structures. The phrase structure rules and the lexical rules together generate **deep structures**. Deep structures are the structures speakers form in their mind before they actually utter the sentence. What

they actually utter are **surface structures**. Surface structures are not always identical with deep structures. To change deep structures to surface structures, certain transformations are needed. **Transformational rules** determine the kind and nature of such transformations. There are four types of transformational rules: insertion, deletion, substitution and movement (Chastain, *op. cit.*).

The **insertion** rule states that any inserted element must have no meaning. The dummy subjects '*it*' and '*there*' as well as auxiliary verbs like '*do*' used in interrogative or negative sentences are examples of such elements:

It is raining.

There is a book on the desk.

Do you study English?

Deletion rules delete certain elements of the deep structure. Deletion rules are of two kinds: constant and identity deletion. **Constant** deletion rules specify the constant deletion of identified sentence elements, such as the deletion of '*you*' in imperative sentences. **Identity** deletion rules specify that the second of identical elements in a

sentence may be deleted. For example, "*If I had anything to tell you, I would (tell you)*".

Substitution rules govern the substitution of a word for another word or phrase, such as the substitution of pronouns for nouns: "*John hurt himself*" instead of "*John hurt John*".

Movement rules move a constituent from one position in the sentence to another. In interrogative sentences, for instance, the auxiliary is moved to the initial position in the sentence. Similarly, the topicalization rule allows the movement of an element to the initial position for emphatic purposes:

'That I will never do'. Instead of
'I will never do that'.

Semantics

Semantics is the study of the meaning of language forms. It deals with the conventional meaning conveyed by the use of words and sentences. Elgin (1979: 29-30) states that a complete grammar must have a semantic component. The task of the semantic component of grammar is to "match the sequences of language with their proper meaning". Falk (op. cit) identifies

two kinds of semantics: lexical semantics and sentence semantics. As their names speak, **lexical semantics** deals with the meaning of words and the relationships between words. **Sentence semantics** deals with the meaning of sentences.

Lexical semantics makes use of semantic features to describe the relationships such as **synonymy**, **antonymy**, and **homonymy**. **Semantic features** are individual elements of meaning that are viewed as **primes** – basic concepts not subject to further division or definition. These individual elements of meaning, when combined, add up to the meaning of a word. For example, the semantic features of the word '*boy*' include: [human, young, male]. Using these semantic features, the relationships between words can be easily explained. For example, synonyms are words that have the same set of semantic features. Antonyms are two words that share all but one of their semantic features in common. And the one exceptional feature must be capable of division into two distinct states along the same dimension. So, '*boy*' and '*girl*' can be considered antonyms, whereas '*man*' and '*girl*' cannot.

Boy : [human, young, male]

Girl : [human, young, female]

Man : [human, adult, male]

Homonyms are words that have the same phonological features but different semantic features; that is, words that have the same pronunciation but different meanings, like *bank* (seaside) and *bank* (financial institution).

Sentence semantics makes use of semantic features to account for the oddness of some sentences that are syntactically all right. For example, consider the following sentences:

*1. *The idea fell off the desk.*

*2. *My pen grows well.*

*3. *This flower coughs violently.*

*4. *Our cat studies physics.*

*5. *The little boy took his son to the cinema.*

All of the above sentences are syntactically well-formed but semantically odd, that is, they are not acceptable or interpretable. In sentence 1, '*fell off the desk*' requires a concrete subject, but '*idea*' is abstract. In sentence 2, '*grows well*' requires not only a concrete but also a living subject; '*pen*' is concrete but not living. In sentence 3, '*coughs*

violently' implies that the subject should be concrete, living and animate. '*Flower*' is not animate. Likewise, in sentence 4, '*studies physics*' necessitates a human subject, which '*a cat*' is not. Finally, in sentence 5, '*took his son*' implies that the subject '*the little boy*' must be, among other things, adult, which it is not.

Sentence semantics also accounts for 'synonymy' and 'ambiguity' in sentences. **Synonymy** is when two or more sentences have the same or similar meaning. For example:

He was paid a lot of money.

They paid him a lot of money.

Ambiguity is when one sentence has more than one meaning, as in: '*I went to the bank.*'

In cases like this, native speakers use context to get the intended meaning. The process of arriving at meaning on the basis of context is called **inferencing** (Chastain, *op. cit.*). Context, by the way, can be of two types: physical and linguistic. **Physical context** refers to the physical circumstances in which language is used. If you see the word 'bank' on the wall of a building in a city, the situation clarifies the meaning of the word. **Linguistic context**, also known as **co-text**, has to

do with the sentences preceding and following a given sentence. Suppose you read the sentence '*I went to the bank*' in a book. There is no physical context there, but if what follows is '*I cashed my cheque*', you'll easily know which meaning of the word 'bank' is intended.

In short, semantics is the study of the meaning of words, phrases, and sentences. It is necessary to note, however, that there are two types of meaning: conceptual and associative. **Conceptual meaning** is the literal dictionary meaning of words. The literal meaning of the word '*big-headed*' is a person with a 'big head'! **Associative** or **stylistic meaning**, on the other hand, is concerned with the associations or connotations attached to a word. When you say somebody is big-headed, you probably mean that the person usually boasts. The literal meaning of words and sentences that is directly expressed is also referred to as **denotation**; whereas the associative meaning attached to words and sentences, which is expressed indirectly, is known as **connotation**. In other words, the denotation of a word is its dictionary meaning, while connotation

has to do with the way that word is interpreted by the interlocutor.

Semantics deals with the study of denotation or conceptual meaning. The intended speaker meaning, or connotation, is the subject matter of pragmatics.

Pragmatics

One of the characteristics of human language is that speakers do not always mean exactly what they say, and do not say exactly what they mean. Apart from the use of ironic and metaphoric language, quite often they say something, but mean something else. Unlike the **direct speech act**, in which speakers say exactly what they mean, in **indirect speech act**, what is said is not identical with what is meant. For example, if you really want to know the time and ask, "What time is it?", you are using a direct speech act. But if a friend rings you way after midnight only to say 'hello', and you say, "What time is it?", you are using an indirect speech act, probably meaning, 'Is this the right time to phone someone?' The study of the indirect meaning implied by what is said or written is called **pragmatics**. So, pragmatics deals with

how an utterance is interpreted by the receiver rather than the literal word-for-word meaning of its words. As Yule (1985: 127) puts it, "pragmatics is the study of invisible meaning".

Discourse analysis

So far, it has been said that phonology is concerned with how sounds are put together to produce meaningful units called morphemes. Morphology deals with how morphemes are joined together to create words. Syntax is the study of how words are put together to produce sentences. Semantics and pragmatics deal with the direct and indirect meaning of these units, respectively. Now, **discourse analysis** has to do with how sentences are joined together to create larger meaningful units of language.

A book is made up of chapters. Every page of every chapter contains separate paragraphs. This means that each paragraph in a chapter is a unit distinct from other paragraphs, and each chapter from other chapters. The same thing holds true about oral language. We are all able to recognize that in a conversation, speakers may talk about several different things. A conversation or speech,

therefore, includes several units, which together form the larger unit (conversation, debate, etc.). The study of how sentences are connected to each other both grammatically and semantically to form larger units of language is called discourse analysis. Yule (*ibid.*) defines discourse analysis as follows:

When ... we ask how it is that we, as language users, make sense of what we read in texts, understand what speakers mean despite what they say, recognize connected as opposed to jumbled or incoherent discourse, and successfully take part in that complex activity called conversation, we are undertaking what is known as discourse analysis. (P:139)

Characteristics of discourse

What the above definitions of discourse analysis boil down to is that discourse has to do with connections between sentences. Connections between sentences can be of two types: grammatical (syntactic) and semantic. Thus, two of the most important characteristics of discourse are cohesion and coherence. **Cohesion** refers to the grammatical ties and connections between sentences. Often with the use of various cohesive links or **cohesive ties**, such as pronouns,

connectors, etc., sentences are linked together. Consider the following two examples:

A). John had a book. Bill needed a book. Bill borrowed John's book. Bill promised to return John's book on Monday. Bill forgot to return John's book. ...

B). John had a book which Bill needed. So, Bill borrowed it, and promised to return it on Monday. But he forgot to return it....

The sentences in A are isolated and unconnected while the same sentences in B are properly connected.

Coherence refers to the semantic connectedness of sentences. It has to do with the sense of discourse rather than its form. So, if the meanings of sentences in a text are not related, it has no coherence. In the following example, although there is grammatical connection between sentences (cohesion), there is no coherence:

My brother bought a beautiful car last week. The car that I drive is red. The colour of that dress doesn't suit you. Dress has five letters. However, I didn't write any letters. Of course, a letter is not as fast as a phone call.

It is necessary to note that coherence is in fact a characteristic of people, not language. It is people who make sense of what they read and hear.

In other words, there might be no obvious semantic relations between sentences. However, if the participants in a discourse fragment can make sense of what others say, that discourse fragment is coherent. Widdowson (1978) gives the following example:

She : That's the telephone.

He : I'm in the bath.

She : OK.

Although there is apparently no relations between what she and he say, a reasonable analysis of what took place in the conversation helps us reconstruct the above conversation in the following way:

She : Could you answer the telephone? (A request is made.)

He : I cannot because I'm in the bath. (The reason why the request cannot be complied is stated.)

She : OK. I'll answer it. (Action is undertaken.)

In oral discourse, cohesion and coherence together help unify the sentences into **speech events** such as debates, discussions, interviews, lectures, etc. In normal circumstances, speech events imply some sort of interaction between and

among interlocutors. That is to say, the people involved in speech events interact with each other. During this **conversational interaction**, participants follow definite patterns that facilitate the exchange. Speakers use certain fixed phrases called **gambits** to signal that they want to open, maintain, and terminate their conversations. At the same time, listeners and speakers cooperate in turn taking as well as the whole conduct of conversation. This **cooperative principle** includes the following four maxims:

1. quantity: make your contribution as informative as is required. In simple terms, speak only as much as needed, no more, no less.
2. quality: do not say that which you believe to be false or for which you lack evidence.
3. relation: make sure that your contributions are relevant.
4. manner: be clear, concise, and orderly.

The final characteristic of discourse is that listeners and readers often need to use their **background knowledge** to interpret what they hear and read.

Is that all?

What went above was only a brief description of the various components of language. Still, even with a thorough knowledge of the above-mentioned components of a language like English, whoever claims s/he knows English perfectly is way wrong. The knowledge of the afore-mentioned components comprises the **linguistic competence**. Native speakers have **communicative competence**, which refers to the ability to use language appropriately in various social contexts to perform certain communicative functions.

In the sense defined above, communicative competence includes not only linguistic competence, but also sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence, and discourse competence.

One aspect of the sociolinguistic competence involves the ability to use language that is appropriate to the situation and the listener. All native speakers intuitively know that the language they use to address children should be different from the one they use to address a highly educated audience in an academic setting (*e.g.*, a lecture). Thus, they regularly change their style and the formality level of their language depending on the

situation. The various levels of formality (ranging from very informal to very formal) are known as **registers**. Native speakers shift from one register to another in response to the situation.

Apart from the variations in the use of language in different situations, there are variations in the language itself. In Iran, for instance, not everyone speaks the same variety of Persian. There are several dialects. There are also different accents. The difference between dialects and accents is that **accents** usually involve variations only in pronunciation, whereas **dialects** involve variations not only in pronunciation but also in grammar and vocabulary. Even within each dialect, there are idiolects. An **idiolect** is defined as the unique way a language is used by an individual person. That's why, sometimes, idiolect is defined as the **idiosyncratic dialect**.

The variations mentioned above can be found in the use of any language by its native speakers. When it comes to second or foreign language, there can be more variations. One example is when a speaker of a language, like Persian, comes into temporary contact with another language, such as English. Since the contact is short, the person does

not fully learn the target language. At the same time, the person needs the target language for meeting his/her basic needs such as transportation, food, shelter, work, etc. In such circumstances, as a result of the contact between two languages, a mixed language called pidgin is developed. A **pidgin** is a language that is the mixture of other languages and is used when people who speak different languages try to communicate with each other.

Another example is when several languages are spoken by the people of a socio-cultural area. In India, several different languages are spoken. Since they are members of the same socio-cultural community (citizens of India), they need a common language of communication. Such a language is called a lingua franca. A **lingua franca** is a common means of communication in an area where several different languages are spoken.

With the above discussion, all we mean to say is that language is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon. It is so complex indeed that today no one can specialize in all aspects of language. There are several fields of study that are concerned with the study of the various dimensions of language and

language learning. Some of them include the following:

1. Linguistics: studies the language itself, its characteristics, and its components such as phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, etc.
2. Sociolinguistics: studies the social aspect of language and is concerned with issues like the variations in language use in social contexts, dialects, accents, styles, registers, pidgin, lingua franca, etc.
3. Psycholinguistics: deals with the relationship between language and mind. Psycholinguists are interested in finding out how humans acquire their native language, how they learn a second language, what mental processes they go through while language learning takes place, etc.
4. Neurolinguistics: is the study of the physiological aspect of language, that is, the relationship between language and the different areas in the brain where language functions are located.

Chapter 3

What is learning?

In the previous chapter, it was mentioned that different aspects of language are studied in different fields. It was said that the physiological aspect of language, or the relationships between language and the brain is the subject matter of neurolinguistics. Due to the importance of the brain as the obvious centre where the ability to learn, process, and use language is located, in this chapter, the brain, some of its characteristics as well as the implications these characteristics may have in language learning are described in more details.

The physical aspect of the brain

A normal human brain weighs on average about three pounds. It is made up of two **hemispheres**: right and left. Researchers have proven that, in general, males tend to have larger right hemispheres and females larger left hemispheres. Since the time this discovery was made, and owing to a common observation of the differential success of males and females in

language learning, theorists and researchers were interested in finding out any possible links between the hemispheres of the brain and language learning. What happened in 1848 was a point of departure in this respect.

The story of Phineas Gage

Yule (1985) tells of the case of P. Gage, a construction foreman in charge of a construction crew, blasting away rocks to lay a new stretch of railway line in 1848. As he pushed an iron tamping rod into the blasting hole in a rock, some gunpowder accidentally exploded and sent the rod up through his left cheek and out from the top of his forehead. After a month, he was up and about, but what interested researchers was that he had no apparent damage to his speech or language functions. This sparked the curiosity of researchers; if language ability is located in the brain, it is obviously not located at the front. But where is it located? This question aroused a surge of interest and occupied the mind of many until Broca partially answered it.

Studying and comparing a group of patients who had difficulty in producing language, Paul

Broca, a French surgeon, reported in 1860s that damage to a specific area of the brain resulted in difficulty in producing speech. This area is now called **Broca's area**. Then, in 1870s, a German doctor, named Wernicke studied a group of patients who had difficulties in comprehension. He discovered that another area in their brain was damaged, and concluded that damage to that area, now called **Wernicke's area**, caused difficulties in comprehending speech. Meanwhile prior to these discoveries, two neurosurgeons, Penfield and Roberts, had identified another area in the brain, now called the **supplementary motor area** or the **motor cortex**, which they thought was responsible for coordinating and controlling the movements of the articulatory muscles and the actual physical speech process.

Experts now agree that the two hemispheres of the brain specialise in different types of mental activity, and that in most cases, language functions tend to be centred in one hemisphere, normally in specific areas of the left hemisphere. This is commonly referred to as **lateralisation**.

Mental processes

Mental activity involves various mental processes. Some of them include:

algorithms versus heuristic processes

serial versus parallel processing

data-driven versus conceptually driven processing

Algorithms versus heuristic processes

Mental activity is generally thought to be of two kinds. Sometimes the brain goes through a fixed, memorised procedure as in processing the routine mental activities. This is called an **algorithm**. At other times, human brain explores new possibilities, discovers other possible ways of doing something or solving a problem, and provides the basis for innovation and improvement. This is an example of a **heuristic process**.

Serial versus parallel processing

When a person is learning a new skill, such as driving a car, the brain can consciously perform only a limited number of mental processes at any one time. In the early stages of learning to drive a car, for instance, the learner has to focus on the different steps of driving separately: first on the foot, to press the clutch, then on one hand to change

the gear, next on both feet to release the clutch and press the accelerator, etc. In such cases, the brain controls and processes the mental activities needed to perform each of the different steps one at a time. This kind of processing is called **serial processing**. But when tasks are over-learned to the point of becoming automatic, such as a professional driver driving a car, attending to individual components becomes unnecessary, and the brain can control and process several activities simultaneously; that is, **parallel processing** becomes possible.

Data driven versus conceptually driven processing

In **data driven processing**, the brain begins with externally received data, then analyses and processes the data to arrive at its final interpretation. In other words, the brain relies on the data coming from outside. For example, when we read a new story, we have no idea about what will happen next in the story before we have read enough of the story to make some guesses. Even those predictions depend heavily on the data we have received. This kind of processing is also known as **bottom-up processing**.

In **conceptually driven processing**, the brain proceeds in the opposite direction. It begins with general knowledge of the subject, and proceeds to relate the information it already has to the new data it receives. When we read something about which we have some background, the brain initiates processing by activating the general background and then goes on by applying that general knowledge to interpret the new data it receives. Conceptually driven processing is also referred to as **top-down processing**.

Levels of mental activity

Chastain (1988) identifies three levels of mental activity: conscious, subconscious (paraconscious), and metacognitive. The **conscious** level is when we are aware of our learning. When we focus our attention on something, the brain is consciously active, as when we read a book and try to understand it. Brain is also active at the subconscious level. The **subconscious** level of mental activity is of three types:

- a. Those that control the basic body functions such as breathing, heart beat, blood circulation, etc.
- b. Those that control skilled or routine activities such as playing the piano or driving a car.

- c. Those that include deep thinking and problem solving such as when somebody's name escapes you when you need it, but later it crosses your mind all of a sudden although you are not consciously thinking about it.

The third level of mental activity is the **metacognitive** level. **Metacognition** refers to the brain's ability to control and monitor its own processes. Unlike computers, which always process information in the same way depending on how they are programmed, the brain can monitor and alter its own mental processes to make them more efficient.

Types of knowledge and learning

According to Anderson (1980), there are two kinds of knowledge stored in the brain: declarative and procedural. **Declarative knowledge** refers to all the previous knowledge that we have and use to comprehend new information. **Procedural knowledge** refers to the knowledge and skills that people acquire during their learning experiences.

Anderson also believes that individuals acquire skills in three stages: cognitive stage, associative stage, and autonomous stage. In the

cognitive stage, they only form an image of the skill in their minds; in the **associative stage**, they devise a method for performing the skilled activity; and in the **autonomous stage**, they develop the ability to perform the activity rapidly and automatically.

Meanwhile, it is commonly believed that learning can be of two general kinds: deductive and inductive. In **deductive learning**, the learner begins with a general rule and applies that rule to specific examples. So, learning proceeds from general rules to specific examples. In **inductive learning**, learning proceeds in the reverse direction; from specific examples to general rules. Here, the learner observes a certain number of specific examples, and then by comparing and contrasting those examples, arrives at a general rule.

Memory

One of the amazing characteristics of human brain is its huge memory capacity. Memory is of two kinds: **short term memory** and **long term memory**. When we talk of a huge storage capacity, it is the long term memory we imply; otherwise, short term memory has a very limited storage

capacity. In fact, the short term memory has two basic limitations:

1. It can hold only a limited amount of information.
2. It can hold information only for a short time.

It might be asked, "With these limitations, what is short term memory good for?" Answer: It is the centre for all active information processing. Long term memory is only a storage place for information. It doesn't process information. All processing should be done in the short term memory. To show the significance of the short term memory, and to clarify the relationship between the long term and the short term memory, a couple of examples might be helpful. Consider a jug or a pitcher. The relationship between the short term memory and the long term memory is somehow similar to that of the mouth of the pitcher and its inside. The inside of the pitcher holds water, but for the water to go there, it has to pass through the mouth. Or consider an office room with a desk and a shelf of folders in each of which there are some files. Long term memory is like the shelf, where information is only stored. The short term memory is like the office desk. Any piece of information

coming in or going out of the office must be first brought on the desk, processed, and then released.

Much like the office, where pieces of information are categorised and stored in different files, the brain sorts pieces of information and stores knowledge in different chunks. Each of the chunks of related knowledge stored in the brain is known as a **schema** and the sum of the chunks is referred to as **schemata**. The schemata that reflect typical sequences of action are called **scripts**.

When a new piece of information comes into the brain, as if a new document has been brought to the office, the relevant schema in the long term memory is activated and brought to the short term memory (the desk), where it is processed and the new piece of information is linked to the already existing background knowledge or schema. When new data are linked to the existing background knowledge, **subsumption** has taken place. If new data are properly subsumed into the existing cognitive network, meaningful learning occurs. In such cases, the form of the message may be forgotten, but the content is retained. This phenomenon is known as **obliterative forgetting**.

Implications for language teaching and learning

The knowledge of the various parts and components of the brain and the functions of each of those parts can have both theoretical and practical implications for language teaching and learning. Based on their knowledge of the brain and its characteristics, scientists have come to agree that there is a period when human brain is best prepared to learn a particular language. This period, which begins from early childhood and continues up to the age of puberty, is the **critical period**. It is generally believed that if language learning takes place during the critical period, which coincides with lateralization, native-like competence can be achieved. Otherwise, it will be extremely difficult to develop native-level proficiency, especially in the phonological aspect of language.

Also, the knowledge of the characteristics of the brain helps us better understand the learning models, and make more informed decisions about their validity. Remember from previous chapters that the proponents of faculty psychology viewed brain as a muscle that needed to be exercised, and learning was mental practice. Then, the behaviouristic psychologists defined learning as a

mechanical process of habit formation through conditioning. In that approach, the brain had no role in learning other than being a link between stimuli and responses. Then came the cognitive psychologists, who viewed learning as a cognitive process of rule formation and emphasised the role of the brain as an active participant in the learning process. Finally, the functional psychologists, while reiterating the role of the brain in learning, added a new dimension to learning : performing functions.

Familiarity with the various theoretical positions on learning, in turn, gives us a clearer picture of the different methods of language teaching and the basic principles on which each method is based.

Part III

Methods of Language Teaching

Chapter 4

Grammar Translation Method (GTM)

Background

Grammar Translation Method is a traditional method that has had a variety of other names including the **classical method** (since it was used in the teaching of classical languages) and the **Prussian method** (in the USA). The origin of GTM goes back much earlier than the modern period of language teaching. Ollendorff's language courses, which came into popular use around 1840s, applied the combination of brief presentations of grammatical points and massive translation practice as a distinct teaching strategy. Ollendorff's method was praised by contemporaries as an active, simple, and effective method because as soon as the rule had been presented, it was applied in short translation – practice sentences. GTM became the principal method for teaching modern languages in schools when Ploetz in

Germany adapted Seidenstücker's French textbooks for use in schools in the mid nineteenth century.

Theory of language

Brown (1987: 75) describes GTM disdainfully as a theory-less method. Actually, since the method is a traditional one, it is not based on any theory that is scientifically justifiable. Nevertheless, in those days, there was a traditional view toward language and the teaching of its grammar known today as the **prescriptive approach to grammar**. In this approach, the linguists or the so-called grammarians would lay down certain rules for the correct use of language, and all language users were to follow those prescribed rules. Those rules were often made based on the comparison between a language like English and more traditional and classical languages like Latin or Greek. A good example of this approach to grammar is that until quite recently, there was a program on one of the Iranian national TV channels entitled 'Let's preserve Persian', in which certain rules were prescribed, saying:

"Don't say ..." *"Say: ..."*

Theory of learning

As it was mentioned in chapter one, GTM was based on 'faculty psychology', in which the mind was viewed in much the same way as a body builder thinks of the muscles; to become stronger, it had to be exercised. And learning was seen as the mental practice. It was believed that the harder the exercise, the more beneficial it would be. That's why in GTM learners are required to memorise long lists of vocabulary items and lots of detailed grammatical rules.

Description

The teacher starts the class by greeting the students in their mother tongue and explaining what they will do in the session. The books usually contain some **literary passages** because one of the objectives of the method is to help learners read and appreciate foreign literature. After each sentence is read, it is translated into the native language because another objective of the method is to enable the learners to translate from target language to native language and vice versa. It is important that students be given the correct meaning of everything they encounter. So, if a student has

problem with the meaning of a sentence or element of a sentence, s/he asks the teacher and the teacher explains the point further. Both the questions and the answers are in the native language of the students. In fact, the **language of the classroom is the native language.**

The reading passage is followed by some comprehension questions to which students write out answers. This is because reading and writing are both among the primary skills to be developed. In fact, **reading and writing are emphasised at the expense of oral language** since practically very little or no attention is given to listening and speaking. The teacher decides whether an answer is correct or not because **teacher is the authority** in the classroom.

Having read the passages and answered the reading comprehension questions, students are presented with one or more grammar rules. Generally, grammar rules may be presented in two ways: deductively and inductively. In the deductive presentation of grammar, which moves from general to specific, first a rule is explained, and then it is applied to examples. In the inductive presentation, it is the other way round. A rule may

never be explicitly explained; instead, examples are presented and the learners are supposed to induce the rule by comparing the examples and arriving at a conclusion. In GTM, **grammar is presented deductively** so that students become conscious of the grammatical rules of the target language.

All through the classroom, most of the interaction is from the teacher to the students. There is little student initiation and student-student interaction. When there is student-student interaction, it is controlled by the teacher. Since the teacher is the authority, s/he decides who should do what. When students make mistakes, or do not know an answer, the teacher supplies the correct answer.

Since the teaching method is traditional, the evaluation (testing) system is also traditional. Written tests like translation passages or questions that require the students to apply grammar rules are commonly used to evaluate students' learning.

Summary of principles and characteristics

Here is a summary of the principal characteristics of the GTM:

1. The main goal of foreign language study is to read its literature or to benefit from the mental discipline

- and intellectual development that result from foreign language study.
2. Another important goal for students is to be able to translate each language into the other.
 3. The teacher is the authority in the classroom. Students do as he says.
 4. Written skills (reading and writing) are the major focus; little or no systematic attention is paid to oral skills (listening and speaking).
 5. The 'sentence' is the basic unit of teaching and language practice.
 6. Accuracy is emphasised.
 7. Grammar is taught deductively.
 8. Students' native language is the medium of instruction.
 9. Interaction is mostly teacher-student.
 10. Literary language is considered superior to spoken language.
 11. Culture is defined as literature and fine arts.
 12. Vocabulary and grammar are emphasised.
 13. The meaning of the target language is made clear by translation into the student's native language.
 14. Written tests (translation and explicit grammar questions) are used to accomplish evaluation.
 15. Having the students get the correct answer is considered very important.
 16. Synonyms and antonyms, and cognates are used to facilitate vocabulary learning.

Evaluation of the method

Grammar Translation Method is one of the most pejoratively described methods in the relevant literature. Brown (1987) describes it as a theory-less method. Richards and Rodgers (1968:5) believe that "*...it has no advocates. It is a method for which there is no theory. There is no literature that offers a rationale or justification for it or that attempts to relate it to issues in linguistics, psychology, or educational theories.*" Celce-Murcia (1991: 6) holds that "*the result of this approach is usually an inability on the part of the students to use the language for communication.*"

However, the fact is that the GTM, like many other methods, has both advantages and disadvantages. Some of the disadvantages were mentioned above. One of the advantages of this method is that it has some sort of natural appeal to both teachers and students. It doesn't require the use of the target language, and it can be used in crowded classes. Let's remember the fact that the GTM has been one of the most stalwart methods in the history of language teaching that has withstood the test of time.

Chapter 5

The Direct Method

Background

One of the major problems with the GTM, as it was mentioned earlier, was that students were unable to use language for oral communication. As a reaction to the total negligence of the oral aspect of language, a teacher named Berlitz proposed a method in which the goal of instruction was how to use a foreign language to communicate. He called his method 'Berlitz Method'. Later, because of the direct association made between meaning and the target language, the method was given the name 'Direct Method'.

As with the GTM, the Direct Method (DM) is not new. It was introduced in France and Germany in the 19th century, and it was officially approved in both countries at the turn of the century.

Theory of language

Language is primarily spoken, not written. Therefore, students study common, everyday speech in the target language.

Theory of learning

Since the method is still a traditional method, so are the underlying theoretical positions. There are only some innovations to make language learning more natural. Actually, one on the basic premises of the Direct Method is that second language learning should be more like first language learning.

Description

Berlitz believed that by translating everything from the target language into the native language and vice versa, teachers deprive their students of having direct contact with the target language. Remember that in the GTM, the only way to make the meaning of words and sentences clear was translation. For instance, if the teacher wanted to teach a word like 'desk', s/he would give the Persian equivalent 'میز'. This way, students would understand the word 'desk' only by referring to the image they had of the word 'میز' in their minds. The obvious consequence of this kind of learning was that students always thought in the native language. And this, apart from hindering them from developing their ability to use language

for oral communication, often caused the native language system to interfere in the target language learning process. To produce language, students first thought of a sentence like 'آرش با مینا ازدواج کرد'. Then, they translated it into the incorrect English sentence:

* '*Arash married with Mina*'.

To avoid the above-mentioned consequences, a basic rule in the Direct Method said, '**No translation is allowed**'. This basic rule, in turn, triggered a number of other principles.

For one thing, if translation is not allowed, how should meaning be made clear? Answer: by demonstration. So, instead of translation or explanation in the native language, **demonstration** is the basic teaching technique. To make the meaning of the word '*desk*', the teacher simply points at the desk and says, '*This is a desk*'. Students make a direct connection between the word '*desk*' and the object being shown. If demonstration is the basic teaching technique, then it follows that there should be lots of **realia**, objects, toys, pictures, etc.

But not everything in the language can be made clear by demonstration; only concrete

elements of language can be shown. What about abstract elements? Remember again that in the GTM, the passages were literary, and literary passages are replete with abstract concepts that cannot be shown by objects or pictures. Moreover, culture is not confined to literature and fine arts in the DM. It includes all aspects of the everyday life of the speakers of the target language. Therefore, another characteristic of the Direct Method is that passages are not literary; rather they reflect the various aspects of people's daily life including geography, history, economy, etc.

Larsen-Freeman (1986) describes a sample lesson which is entitled 'Looking at a map'. The passage is about the geography of the United States. For ease of explanation and understanding, we will consider a passage about the geography of Iran.

As the class begins, the teacher places a map of Iran in the front of the classroom. He greets the students in English, and asks them to open their books. Students are then called on, one by one, to read a sentence from the reading passage. This shows that reading is an important skill to be developed right from the beginning. After each sentence is read, the teacher points to the part of the

map the sentence describes. The passage may be something like this:

We are looking at a map of Iran. Iran has 30 provinces. ...There are two mountain ranges in Iran. Stretching from the northwest to the northeast is the Alborz mountain range. The Zagros mountains stretch from the northwest to southwest. To the north of Iran is the Caspian Sea. ...

There is no translation. The teacher makes the meaning of each sentence clear by pointing to the relevant part of the map.

When students finish reading the passage, the teacher asks them if they have any questions. If there is any, the teacher answers by demonstration. For instance, If the question is 'what is a province?', the teacher points to each of the provinces of Iran on the map and says, 'Azerbaijan is a province, Qazvin is a province', etc.

When students finish asking questions, the teacher begins asking his/her own questions in order of increasing difficulty, starting with simple yes/no questions like 'Is this a map of Iran?' to which students simply reply in chorus 'yes', and proceeding to more challenging and productive

questions to which students reply using full sentences. As in :

Teacher: Is Qazvin a country?

Students: No, it is a province.

The teacher also asks questions or makes statements the purpose of which is to indirectly present the grammatical point of the lesson. Supposing that the grammatical point of the lesson is prepositions, the teacher can make the following statements:

*We are **in** the classroom.*

*The tree is **out of** the classroom.*

*I am standing **between** Mina and Laleh.*

*Come **to** the blackboard, shiva.*

*Is your book **on** the desk?*

*What are you looking **at**?*

etc.

There is more practice, in which the teacher and students ask and answer questions like the ones just mentioned. The purpose of such practice is for the students to learn **how to use** language not just know *about* it.

When students use the target language, they may well make mistakes. As an example, a student might say:

'Susan is sitting **among me and Parvin'.*

The teacher says:

*'Is she sitting **among** you or **between** you?'*

Alternatively, the teacher repeats the same sentence with the rising intonation and a questioning tone and with added emphasis on the misused preposition to signal that there was something wrong. If the student cannot correct herself, the class may help. If neither could correct the mistake, the teacher provides the correct form, but only as a last resort. This means that as far as possible, students are encouraged to **self-correct**.

Unlike the GTM, in which virtually no attention is paid to pronunciation, in the DM, **pronunciation receives great emphasis**. If a student has difficulty pronouncing a word, the teacher works on the pronunciation until s/he ensures that the student's pronunciation is correct.

The teacher next instructs the students to turn to an exercise in the lesson which asks them to fill in the blanks. They read a sentence out loud and supply the missing element:

The Persian Gulf is ... the southern coast.

Elham is looking ... the picture.

This and the other activities referred to above, indicate that unlike the GTM, where grammar was

presented deductively, here in the DM, **grammar is presented inductively.**

Finally, the teacher asks the students to take out their notebooks, and gives them a dictation. The principle behind this activity is that although in the DM, language is primarily speech, writing, just like reading, is not ignored. It is worked on from the beginning.

Summary of the principles and characteristics

In practice, the DM stands for the following principles:

1. Classroom instruction is conducted exclusively in the target language. (Native language should not be used in the classroom.)
2. Initially, only everyday vocabulary and sentences are taught.
3. Grammar is presented inductively.
4. New teaching points are introduced orally because language is thought to be primarily speech.
5. Concrete vocabulary is taught through demonstration, objects, pictures; abstract vocabulary is taught later by association of ideas.
6. Correct pronunciation is emphasized.
7. Self-correction facilitates language learning.
8. All four skills are worked on from the beginning, although oral skills are seen as basic.

9. The syllabus is based on situations, not on linguistic structures.
10. The goal of the teachers who use the direct method is to help students learn how to communicate in the target language. In order to achieve this, students should learn to think in the target language.
11. The teacher is the director of class activities. Yet, students are less passive than in the GTM. The teacher and students are more like partners in the teaching/learning process.
12. Vocabulary is emphasized over grammar.
13. To accomplish evaluation, students are usually asked to use the language (both orally and in written form), not to demonstrate their knowledge about the language. For example, the students might be interviewed orally or might be asked to write a paragraph about something they have studied.
14. Accuracy is still important, but errors are corrected by getting the students to self correct.

Evaluation of the method

Now that we have considered the principles and characteristics of the Direct Method, let's have a look at its potential strength as well as possible weak points. Compared with the Grammar Translation Method, the Direct Method enjoys certain advantages. The fact that language is seen as being primarily speech while, at the same time, all

four skills are worked on, makes the Direct Method look more **naturalistic** than the GTM. In addition, the self-correction technique gives the students a better feeling than when they are interrupted and obtrusively corrected. Moreover, the goal of instruction, which is oral communication in the target language, adds to its natural appeal, and increases students' motivation.

Nevertheless, the Direct Method is perceived to have several drawbacks too. For one thing, it requires teachers who are native speakers or have native-like fluency in the target language. It is largely dependent on the teacher's skill, rather than a textbook. In countries like Iran, not many teachers are proficient enough in the target language to adhere fully to the principles of the method. Critics point out that strict adherence to Direct Method principles is often counter-productive, since teachers are required to go to great length to avoid using the native language, when sometimes a simple brief explanation in the students' native tongue would have been a more efficient route to comprehension. Besides, the goal of trying to teach conversation skills is considered impractical in view of the restricted time available for foreign

language teaching in schools. Finally, although it offers innovations at the level of teaching procedures, it lacks a thorough methodological basis. As Brown (1987: 58) puts it: "The Direct Method was criticized for its weak theoretical foundations. The methodology was not so much to be credited for its success as the general skill and personality of the teacher".

Chapter 6

The Audiolingual Method

Background

Like the Direct Method, the Audiolingual Method (ALM) was a reaction to the lack of attention paid to the oral aspect of language in the GTM. In the 1940s, with the entry of America into the Second World War, American government commissioned universities to develop foreign language programmes to supply the government with military personnel who were fluent in foreign languages. As a result, the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) was established in 1942, which later came to be known as the '**Army Method**'. The methodology of the Army Method, like the Direct Method, derived from the intensity of contact with the target language rather than in terms of its underlying theory. However, the increasing influence of linguistics and psychology on language teaching led to the emergence of the American approach to ESL, which by the mid 1950s became known as the Audiolingual Method (Richards & Rodgers, 1986).

Theory of language

As it was mentioned in chapter one, the theory of language underlying Audiolingualism was derived from a view that came to be known as the **structural descriptive** linguistics. The structural descriptive linguistics developed in part as a reaction to traditional grammar. Some of the important tenets of this scientific approach to language analysis are as follows:

Language is primarily speech not writing.

A language is a set of habits.

Teach the language not about the language.

A language is what its native speakers say, not what somebody thinks they ought to say.

Languages are different.

Rivers (1964: 5)

Theory of learning

The theory of learning underlying Audiolingualism, **behaviourism**, is another anti-mentalistic, empirically based approach to the study of human behaviour. To the behaviourist, there is no mind. Learning is defined as an observable change in the learners' behaviour. This observable change in the learners' behaviour occurs through a mechanical process of **conditioning**, which

depends on three elements: a stimulus, a response, and reinforcement. The stimulus serves to elicit behaviour; the response is the behaviour triggered by the stimulus; and positive reinforcement encourages the repetition of the response in the future and increases the likelihood that the behaviour will occur again and eventually become a habit. What all this boils down to is that learning was viewed as a mechanical process of **habit formation**, and habits were formed through a process of stimulus response conditioning in which the brain was seen to have no role other than an empty box that was the link between the stimulus and the response.

Description

In the ALM, each lesson begins with a **dialogue** because it is believed that language forms do not occur by themselves; they occur most naturally within a context. A dialogue is considered to be a minimal natural context. Since learning is seen as a habit formation process, **instruction is entirely in the target language**. No mother tongue is used in the classroom, neither by the teacher nor by the students. Native language interferes in the

target language habit formation process and leads to the formation of bad habits. So, the teacher uses simple instructions accompanied by gestures and actions to facilitate comprehension. Since oral language precedes written language, the dialogue is presented orally first. There are three stages in the teaching of language forms including the dialogue.

The three stages are:

- a. Introduction (presentation)
- b. repetition (imitation)
- c. production

In the first stage, the teacher presents the dialogue one or two times and acts it out. Students only listen and try to understand what the teacher is saying. During the repetition stage, the teacher has the whole class repeat each line of the dialogue after his/her model. They repeat each line several times. The role of the teacher is to provide **a model for imitation**, and students are **imitators**. Whenever students have difficulty and stumble in their repetition, the teacher uses a **backward build up** (expansion) drill to help the students overcome their difficulties in imitation. S/he breaks down the troublesome sentence into smaller parts, then starts with the end of the sentence and has students repeat

those words. Next, the teacher adds a few more words and students repeat the expanded phrase. This goes on until the whole sentence is built up and successfully repeated. For example, a sentence like 'my brother works in a large factory' may be practiced as follows:

T (teacher): factory

S (students): factory.

T: a large factory

S: a large factory

T: works in a large factory

S: works in a large factory

T: My brother works in a large factory.

S: My brother works in a large factory.

The advantage of the backward build up drill is that it helps the students to maintain the natural intonation patterns while they are repeating.

In the production stage, only after students have repeated the dialogue several times, they are allowed to adopt the role of the characters in the dialogue and have limited opportunities for production. However, even then, the opportunities for production are strictly limited. Practically, students only try to mimic the teacher's model as accurately as possible. Supposing that the dialogue is a conversation between A and B, and after

having the students repeat each line several times, the teacher says A's lines, and the students chorally say B's lines. Then they switch roles. After enough controlled practice of this kind, the teacher divides the class into two halves, each half saying either A's or B's lines, and then trading roles. Finally, to make sure that no one has any difficulty saying the lines of the dialogue, individual learners take turn saying the lines of the dialogue. If anyone makes a mistake in saying their line, the teacher interrupts the activity and has that student as well as the whole class repeat several more times until the problem is overcome. This shows that **errors are not tolerated**. Errors must be immediately corrected; otherwise, they will develop into bad habits.

The teacher then moves to the next major phase of the lesson; that is, presenting grammar. In the ALM, grammar is presented inductively. The teacher presents the new grammatical point going through the afore-mentioned three stages of introduction, imitation and production. S/he begins by reciting a line from the dialogue:

'My brother works in a bank'.

Then, s/he shows the students a picture of a 'bank' and says, *'My brother works in a bank'*. In the next

step (imitation), the teacher has the students repeat the original sentence, the cue, and the revised sentence.

Teacher: My brother works in a bank.

Students: My brother works in a bank.

Teacher: a factory

Students: a factory

Teacher: My brother works in a factory.

Students: My brother works in a factory.

Then in the production stage, the teacher says the original sentence and the cue (or shows the cue) and the students supply the revised sentence.

Teacher: My brother works in a bank.

Students: My brother works in a bank.

Teacher: a factory

Students: My brother works in a factory.

The teacher says 'very good' when students respond correctly because **reinforcement** is a crucial element in the conditioning process.

The above drill is a single-slot **substitution** drill in which one of the elements of a sentence is substituted by the given cues. As students progress, the teacher has double-slot and multi-slot substitution drills.

Substitution drills are followed by **transformation** drills, in which the students are asked to change one type of sentence into another,

for example, active into passive, direct speech act into indirect speech act, and vice versa. Again the three stages of introduction, imitation, production are followed. It is important to have this sequence. If students are allowed to produce sentences before they have repeated and memorized them, they may make mistakes, and mistakes lead to bad habits. So, **student initiation is not allowed.**

It must be noted that during all these activities, it is the teacher who decides what should be done and how. This indicates that the teacher, apart from being a **model for imitation**, is like an **orchestra leader**, directing and controlling the behaviour of the students.

In another session, the written form of the lesson will also be presented. Thus, in the ALM, all four skills are worked on. Of course, the natural sequence of skills is listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Summary of the principles and techniques

Here are some of the basic principles and techniques of the ALM:

1. The use of drills, pattern practice, and mimicry memorization is a distinctive feature of the ALM.
2. The native language and the target language should be kept apart so that the students' native language interferes as little as possible with the students' attempts to acquire the target language.
3. One of the teacher's major roles is that of a model of the target language. Teachers should provide students with a native-like model. Another role is that of an orchestra leader, directing and controlling the students' activities. Students are **imitators** of the teacher's model.
4. Errors must be prevented because they lead to the formation of bad habits. At the same time, positive reinforcement helps the students to develop correct habits. Conditioning the desired responses depends upon providing immediate and appropriate reinforcement.
5. The purpose of language learning is to learn how to use language to communicate.
6. Since learning is habit formation, students should over-learn; that is, learn to respond automatically without stopping to think.
7. Grammar is learnt by analogy rather than by analysis. In other words, grammar is presented inductively.
8. The meanings that the words of a language have for the native speaker can be learnt only in a linguistic and cultural context, not in isolation.

9. Students learn the language skills in the same order as in first language learning: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. So, speech is more basic to language than the written form.
10. The major challenge of foreign language teaching is getting students to overcome the habits of their native language. To this end, although the native language is banned from the classroom, a comparison between the native language and the target language will tell the teacher in what areas the students will probably experience difficulty. In other words, it is possible to predict the areas of difficulty.
11. Structures of language are emphasised over all other areas. The syllabus is a structural one. In the early stages of learning, vocabulary is deliberately kept at a minimum to allow students to focus their attention on structures. Once structures are learnt, students can shift their attention on words and expand their reservoir of vocabulary.
12. A discrete point test in which only one point of the language is tested at a time is most compatible with the ALM.

Evaluation of the method

The ALM, according to Steinberg (1993) was the product of language analyses provided by the structural linguists and the stimulus-response learning provided by behaviourists. Steinberg

believes that these theories endowed the ALM with a credence that no other method could claim.

Audiolingualism reached its period of widespread use in the 1960s, generating a surge of interest among both teachers and students. It promised moon and stars in language teaching.

But when the early enthusiasm faded away, and the moon and stars proved late in arrival, there came criticism on two fronts. On the one hand, the theoretical foundations of Audiolingualism were attacked as being unsound both in terms of language theory and learning theory. On the other hand, practitioners found the practical results fell short of expectations.

Steinberg (*ibid.*) claims that although the ALM generated an enormous amount of enthusiasm, it was in reality less effective than the more traditional methods like the Direct Method. In contrast with the DM, the ALM almost entirely dropped the use of natural situations and spontaneous speech.

Littlewood (1981), while degrading the ALM for being narrow in perspective and focusing only on the mastery of the linguistic forms, acknowledges that some techniques and activities

of the ALM, such as drills, can be adapted and used even in a communicative approach to help learners to relate language forms more clearly to their communicative functions. Littlewood (1988) also acknowledges that imitation may be an important component in the learning process.

Stevick (1988) strongly advocates the audiolingual techniques of dialogue, **mimicry-memorization**, and various types of drills to master most areas of language, particularly structure and vocabulary.

The fact that oral language is not ignored, the sequence of skills is natural, and imitation is a good technique for learning certain areas of language, like pronunciation, constitutes an undeniable merit of the ALM. What reduces the appeal of the method is that it requires a native-speaking teacher, can be boring due to mechanical repetition, and is not suitable for large classes.

In a nutshell, in the early 1960s, Audiolingualism had raised hopes of ushering in a golden age of language learning. By the end of the decade, it became the whipping boy for all that was wrong with language teaching.

The Cognitive-code Approach

Introduction

The advent of new ways of thinking in the 1960s saw the demise of the ALM. The idea that learning a language means forming a set of habits was seriously challenged. On the linguistic front, the **transformational generative** linguists argued against the structural descriptive linguistics and avowed that language is not a set of structures and patterns extracted from the performance of the native speakers. On the psychological front, the **cognitive psychologists** held that learning is a cognitive process of **rule formation** rather than a mechanical process of habit formation, thus severely undermining the behaviouristic view to learning. The new psychologists and linguists believed that to learn a language, people should use their thinking processes or cognition to discover the rules of the language. The emphasis on human cognition led to the name 'cognitive-code' approach.

In the cognitive-code approach learners are seen to be responsible for their own learning, engaged in formulating hypotheses in order to

discover the rules of the target language. **Errors are inevitable** and show that learners are actively forming and testing hypotheses. And meaning is thought to be as important as form.

There are various methods that subscribe to the cognitive-code approach, including the Silent Way, Suggestopedia, Community Language Learning, and Total Physical Response.

Chapter 7

The Silent Way

Background

The Silent Way (SW) is the name of a method of language teaching devised by Caleb Gattegno. Gattegno's name is well-known for his revival of interest in the use of coloured wooden sticks called Cuisenaire **rods**. This method is based on the premise that the teacher should be silent for as much of class time as possible and let the students be active and discover the rules of language themselves. Because it is believed that learning is facilitated if the learner discovers or creates rather than repeats and remembers the language.

The educational psychologist and philosopher Jerome Bruner compares two traditions of teaching: the expository mode and the hypothetical mode. In **the expository mode**, decisions covering the mode, pace, and style of exposition are principally determined by the teacher; the student is a listener. In **the hypothetical mode** the teacher and the student are in a more cooperative position. The student is not a

bench-bound listener. In the former teaching is superior, while in the latter learning is superior to teaching.

The SW belongs to the latter tradition. It views learning as **problem-solving**, creative, **discovery activity** in which the learner is a principal actor rather than a bench-bound listener.

Theory of language

The Silent Way takes a structural approach to the organization of language. Language is seen as groups of sounds arbitrarily associated with specific meanings and organized into sentences or strings of meaningful units by grammar rules. Language is separated from its social context and taught through artificial situations usually represented by rods. The sentence is the basic unit of teaching, and the teacher focuses on propositional meaning rather than communicative value (Richards & Rodgers, 1986).

Theory of learning

In many of the methods of language teaching, attempt is made to make the conditions of second language learning similar to those of first

language learning. But Gattegno believes that the processes of second language learning are radically different from those involved in first language learning. He avows that the 'natural' or 'direct' approaches to second language learning are misguided and should be replaced by an 'artificial' and strictly controlled approach. Silence is considered as a good vehicle for learning because in silence students concentrate on the task to be accomplished and the potential means to its accomplishment. Gattegno thinks that repetition (as opposed to silence) consumes time and encourages the scattered mind to remain scattered.

Gattegno speaks of remembering as a matter of 'paying ogdens'. An **ogden** is a unit of mental energy required to link permanently two mental elements, such as a shape and a sound. He also sees language learning through the SW as a **recovery of innocence** – a return to our full powers and potentials.

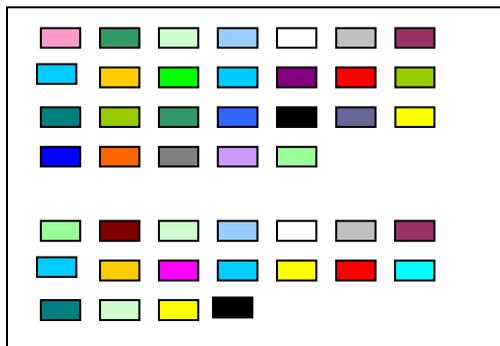
To summarize, the SW is called so because the teacher keeps silent during most of the class time. This is because the learning theory behind it is cognitive psychology, the basic tenet of which is that learning is superior to teaching. Learning is

regarded as a mental process that happens in the learner's mind. Students are given responsibility for their own learning, and the teacher is only a facilitator. That's why the teacher is silent and lets students discover the features of language themselves.

Description

Since the teacher is no longer the authority and does not explain everything, s/he uses a number of charts and some rods to guide students in their learning. One such chart is the sound-colour chart. Hanging on the wall, the **sound-colour chart** contains a number of small rectangular blocks. Each block is a different colour and represents one of the sounds of the target language. The sound-colour chart is divided into two halves. One half contains coloured rectangular blocks representing the consonant sounds, and the other half contains those representing the vowel sounds. These sounds are arranged in a sequence similar to the sequence of sounds in the students' native language.

Chart 1 : A sound-colour chart



The teacher uses this chart to teach the association between colours and the sounds of the target language. The teacher points in succession to each of the blocks of colour in a row without saying anything. When no one responds, the teacher repeats the pointing, but this time when he touches the first block, he says /b/. As he continues to tap the other blocks, some students say /p/, /t/, etc. They discover that those blocks of colour represent the sounds of language and their sequence is the familiar sequence of sounds in their mother tongue. There are a couple of reasons for this activity. First, the teacher does not tell students everything so they are given the opportunity to **guess and discover**. Second, one of the principles of the Silent Way is to move from the known to the unknown. The familiar sequence of

sounds in the students' native language facilitates their learning of the associations between colours and sounds.

When the target language sound is different from the native language sound, the teacher uses gestures, body movement, etc. to help learners to notice the difference and to come closer to the correct pronunciation of the sound. For instance, the sound /ع/ in Persian has got two variations in English, /ɪ/ and /i:/. To show the difference between these two phonemes, the teacher first points to /ɪ/ and then to /i:/. While he is doing this, he puts his two palms together, then spreads them apart, indicating that students should lengthen the latter sound. Or to help them pronounce the sound /w/ correctly, he rounds his lips and without vocalising, mouths the sound so that students come to understand that the sound is bilabial and its accurate pronunciation requires lip rounding. He sometimes explains in the learners' mother tongue how they should pronounce certain sounds, but he doesn't say the sounds himself because language is not learnt by repeating after a model. Students should assume responsibility for their own learning and develop their own 'inner criteria' for correctness.

When the teacher is satisfied that students can successfully pronounce the sound of each of the coloured blocks in a fixed sequence, he points to the blocks in a different order so that students do not memorize a fixed order.

Then the teacher asks one of the students to come to the board. He points to the student and taps out four coloured blocks. A few students say 'Mina', which is the student's name. This way, the teacher can evaluate students' learning while they are busy learning the language. Students' actions can tell the teacher whether or not they have learnt. At the same time, the teacher makes use of what students already know since learning involves transferring what one knows to new contexts.

If a student hesitates or cannot locate the block representing a certain sound, other students help him/her, using their native language. Students should learn to assume responsibility for learning and rely on themselves and each other, not the teacher.

Once the learners have practised with the sound-colour chart and learnt the association between colours and sounds, the chart can be used as a versatile tool for learning the various

components of language. The first use of the chart is in learning new vocabulary. The teacher shows students 'a pen', points to one coloured block, and then taps out three other coloured blocks on the sound-colour chart. Since students are already familiar with these sound/colour associations, some of them attempt to say '*pen*'. The teacher points to the block of colour representing /ə/ and using gesture or instruction in the learners' native language shows the students how to produce the target language sound. The principle behind this activity is that the teacher works with the students while the students work on the language. The teacher points to 'a pen' once again and taps out one coloured block followed shortly by three other consecutive squares of colour. He is silent. Students chorally reply 'a pen'. So, **silence is a tool**. It helps to foster autonomy. It also removes the teacher from the centre of attention so he can listen to and work with students.

Using the sound-colour chart, the teacher shows the students how to pronounce new words or phrases such as 'a pen', 'a book', 'a man', etc. But what about their written form? The written skills (reading and writing) are not ignored in the Silent

Way although they follow from what learners have learnt to say orally. To show the written form of the newly presented words and phrases, the teacher refers to a second chart called the word chart. Much like a dictionary, which contains words followed by their pronunciation in phonetic symbols, the **word chart** contains the written form of the new words in a vertical column followed by their pronunciation represented by coloured blocks.

Chart 2 - A word chart

Book	  
Boy	 
Man	  
Pen	  
Cat	  
Dog	  

The teacher points to the written word '*book*' and taps the three coloured blocks in front of it that represent the sounds /b/, /u/, and /k/. It should be

noted that each word in the word chart is written in different colours. Every letter is in the same colour as the sound that the letter signifies. For instance, the letter 'c' in 'cat' is in a colour that signifies /k/, and the letter 'a' is in a colour that signifies /æ/.

This might cause certain problems. Due to the fact that meaning is made clear by focusing students' perceptions, not through translation or explanation, students might end up with some misunderstandings. By comparing and contrasting the oral and written forms of the words they have learnt, they conclude that the sound /b/ is written as 'b'. But they may also conclude that the sound /u/ is written as 'oo' (book) and the sound /k/ is always written as 'k'. Similarly, they may conclude that the letters 'k' and 'oo' are pronounced as /k/ and /u/, respectively. This is where the problem lies. Obviously enough, in English, there is no fixed one-to-one correspondence between letters and sounds. The sound /k/, for instance, can be spelled as 'k' as in 'book', 'c' as in 'cat', 'ch' as in 'character' and so on. To raise the learners' awareness of the nature of associations between the sounds of language and their spelling, a third chart known as the Fidel chart is used.

Chart 3 – A Fidel chart

letter	sound	Ex.	pronunciation
a		cat	  
		cake	  
		farm	  
	...		
sound	letter	Ex.	pronunciation
	K	make	  
	C	cat	  
	q	quick	   
	...		

The purpose of the **Fidel chart** is to help students to associate the sounds of language with their spelling. It makes them aware that a single sound may have different spellings, or conversely, one letter may have different pronunciations.

In the Silent Way, errors are seen as important and necessary to learning. They show the

teacher where things are unclear. The teacher does not supply the correct language until all self-correction options have failed. This is because if students are simply given answers, rather than being allowed to self-correct, they will not retain them. Therefore, when a student has trouble, the teacher remains silent and looks to other students. The teacher's silence encourages group co-operation and they can learn from one another. The teacher provides help as a last resort. Even then, since the teacher only mouths the correct sound but does not vocalise it, the students' pronunciation may improve but still not be close to the native speaker pronunciation. The teacher needs to look for progress, not perfection. Learning takes place in time. Students learn at different rates.

At the end of the class time, the teacher asks students in their native language for their reactions to the lesson, and the students give various kinds of feedback.

Review of the principles and characteristics

Some of the principles and characteristics of the Silent Way include the following:

1. The Silent Way is based on discovery learning. Learning is facilitated if learners discover or create rather than repeat and remember.
2. Learning is facilitated by accompanying physical objects.
3. Learning is superior to teaching.
4. The syllabus is structural; it is composed of linguistic structures.
5. The sentence is the basic unit of teaching.
6. The teacher should start from the known and move toward the unknown.
7. Students need to develop their 'inner criteria' for correctness and assume responsibility for their own learning.
8. Students' actions can tell the teacher whether or not they have learnt.
9. Silence is a tool. It helps to foster autonomy and encourage cooperation. It also frees the teacher to closely observe the students' behaviour.
10. Meaning is made clear by focusing students' perceptions, not through translation.
11. The teacher neither praises nor criticises students because students need to be self-reliant.
12. Errors are tolerated and seen as a natural, indispensable part of learning. As far as possible, self-correction and peer correction techniques are used. Teacher correction comes as a last resort.
13. Progress is the goal, not perfection.

14. Language is for self-expression. In other words, the goal is that students should be able to use language for expressing themselves.
15. The structures of the syllabus are not arranged in a linear fashion, but rather are constantly recycled.
16. The teacher is a technician or engineer, giving only the necessary help. Learners do the learning and actively engage in exploring the language. The teacher works with the students; the students work on the language.
17. Since the teacher is silent, student-student verbal interaction is encouraged.
18. The feeling of the students is important. Care is taken that students learn in a relaxed, enjoyable learning environment. The feedback sessions at the end of lessons provide opportunities for learners to express how they feel.
19. Pronunciation is worked on from the beginning. Grammar is presented inductively. Vocabulary is somewhat restricted at first. All four skills are worked on from the beginning of the course, although written skills follow oral skills.
20. The teacher constantly assesses (evaluates) the students' learning while they are working on the language. So, there may be no formal test.

Evaluation of the method

Like many other methods, the Silent Way has had its share of both criticism and approval.

According to Richards and Rodgers (*ibid.*), despite the philosophical quality of Gattegno's writings, the actual practices of the Silent Way are much less revolutionary than might be expected. Working from a rather traditional structural and lexical syllabus, the method exemplifies many of the features that characterise more traditional methods such as Audiolingualism, with a strong focus on accurate repetition of sentences modelled initially by the teacher and a movement through guided elicitation exercises to freer communication.

According to Brown (1987), in one sense, the Silent Way is too harsh a method, and the teacher too distant to encourage a communicative atmosphere. Students often need more guidance and overt correction than the Silent Way permits.

There are a number of aspects of language that can indeed be 'told' to students to their benefit. They do not need struggle for hours or days with a concept that could easily be clarified by the teacher's direct guidance. Moreover, the rods and charts wear away after a few lessons and other materials must be introduced, at which point the Silent Way can lose all its charm and look like any other language classroom.

In short, two of the most serious shortcomings of the Silent Way include the fact that the method employs some rather artificial teaching techniques and practices, and that students are given too much independence at the expense of the teacher's authority.

Despite these criticisms, there are still insights that can be derived from the Silent Way. As Brown (*ibid.*) puts it:

You need not ... reject a method entirely just because it does not apply to your situation perfectly. ... All too often, we are tempted as teachers to provide everything for our students, served up on a silver platter. We could benefit from injecting healthy doses of discovery learning into our classroom activities and from providing less teacher talk than we usually do to let the students work things out on their own. These are some of the contributions of innovation. They expose us to new thoughts that we can – through our developing theoretical rationale for language teaching – sift through, weigh, and adapt to multiple contexts. (P:143)

Chapter 8

Suggestopedia

Background

Suggestopedia, recently renamed as Desuggestopedia, is a method that was developed by the Bulgarian psychiatrist-educator Georgi Lozanov. Lozanov asserts that adults bring certain fears, anxieties, and negative attitudes with themselves to language classrooms. Due to these negative feelings and worries, they tend to set up psychological barriers, which hinder or slow down their learning and do not allow learners to use their full mental powers. Lozanov claims that people are capable of learning much more than they give themselves credit for if the psychological barriers are somehow eliminated or reduced. He claims that by reducing anxiety and desuggesting negative feelings, learning can be accelerated 25 times over that in learning by conventional methods. Suggestopedia, the

application of the principles of suggestology (suggestion) to pedagogy, is developed to enable learners to make use of their full mental capacity. By suggesting positive feelings and desuggesting negative feelings and anxieties, the method capitalises on relaxed concentration that leads to **'superlearning'**.

The relaxed state of mind and relaxed environment are created not only by the teacher's suggestions and desuggestions, but also by the decoration, furniture, classroom set up, and music.

Theory of language

Lozanov does not articulate a theory of language. But Richards and Rodgers believe that the emphasis on memorisation of vocabulary along with their translation suggests a view of language in which lexis is central and in which lexical translation rather than contextualisation is stressed. Of course, Lozanov does occasionally refer to the importance of experiencing language material in 'whole meaningful texts', and recommends home study of whole meaningful texts (light-hearted stories with emotional context). Still, the sample lesson he gives suggests that language is vocabulary

and that grammar rules are for organising vocabulary.

Larsen-Freeman thinks that language is the first plane of the two-plane process of communication. For communication, you need not only to know words and grammar but also be aware of the factors that influence the linguistic message. These factors, for example the way one dresses or the nonverbal behaviour, are in the second plane. The first plane is language itself; its vocabulary and grammar.

Theory of learning

Suggestion is at the heart of Suggestopedia. Learning takes place in a state of concentrative psycho-relaxation in which unwanted or blocking memories are constantly desuggested and the desired and facilitating memories are constantly suggested, that is, the memory banks are loaded with desired memories.

Description

One of the most noticeable characteristics of Suggestopedia is that the classroom is unusual. Instead of the wooden chairs arranged in rows,

students are seated in comfortable cushioned armchairs that are arranged in a semicircle; soft music is playing and the atmosphere is quite cosy. This is because one of the basic premises of Suggestopedia is that learning is facilitated in a relaxed, comfortable environment. There are also several posters on the wall. Some of these posters are travel posters to help suggest that students are in a new environment. Some others contain grammatical information, for example the conjugation of the verb 'be', the past and past participle form of irregular verbs, or the various forms of pronouns (subject, object, possessive). The purpose of such posters is to encourage peripheral learning. **Peripheral learning** refers to the indirect learning from what is present in the environment without conscious attention being directed to it.

The teacher greets students in their native language and, speaking reassuringly, tells them that they are about to have an exciting experience. He says confidently, "You don't need to try to learn. It will come naturally. Sit back and enjoy yourself". By so doing, the teacher tries to both suggest positive feelings and desuggest negative ones.

The teacher plays some soft music, asks the students to sit back comfortably, close their eyes, and take an imaginary trip with him. He describes the airplane flight and guides them in their imaginary journey to an English speaking country. He asks them to imagine that they are fluently using English in London. He then asks them to open their eyes and to bring their awareness of their imaginary trip to the classroom. This shows that **activating the learner's imagination** will aid learning. By suggesting that students feel themselves replying fluently in English to questions, the teacher tries to increase the student's self-confidence.

Next, the teacher suggests that students choose new names. He shows them a list of names and pronounces the names and has the students repeat their pronunciation. One by one, students choose new names. They also choose new jobs. The teacher shows them a list of jobs and using pantomime, translations, etc. makes the meaning of the words clear so that each student can choose the job s/he likes best. In fact, they can create an imaginary biography about their new identity. Assuming a new name and identity has a couple of advantages. It increases the **students' feeling of**

security and allows them to be more open. They feel less inhibited since their performance is really that of a different person. Moreover, since their attention is not focused on the linguistic elements, they learn many words (e.g., words for jobs and so on) in an amusing way without the negative feelings accompanying conscious learning.

Once students have chosen their new identities, the teacher teaches them a short dialogue in which two or more people greet each other and inquire about each other's profession. Then he tells the class to pretend that they are at a party and asks them to use the dialogue they just learnt to greet one another. The aim of this activity is to let the students know that the language they learn can be put to immediate use. Moreover, when the attention of the students is off the linguistic forms and on the process of communication, learning takes place better.

The teacher distributes a handout to the class. The dialogue is entitled "to want to is to be able to". Even the title of the dialogue suggests positive feelings. On each page of the handout, there are two columns of print. In one column, there is the English dialogue. In the other column, its translation

is given because one way to make meaning clear is through translation. The teacher also briefly mentions a few points about the vocabulary and grammar used in the dialogue. This indicates that vocabulary and grammar can be explained, but they should not be dwelt on.

The teacher put on some music and then begins to read the text at a slow pace, giving students enough time not only to see the text but also its translation. This way, the students' anxiety is reduced. He matches his voice to the volume and intonation of the music. By so doing, he makes the students learn the language both consciously and subconsciously. In addition, by having the students listen to language and music simultaneously, the teacher activates both hemispheres of the students' brain.

The teacher reads the script again; this time students close their eyes and just listen. A different music is played, and the teacher reads the script at a normal rate without trying to match his voice to the rhythm of the music. This activity characterises one of the main features of Suggestopedia, i.e., pseudo-passivity. **Pseudo-passivity** refers to a

state of physical relaxation but high mental activity and is ideal for overcoming psychological barriers.

After reading the passage for the second time, the teacher suggests that students play a game. He pulls out a hat from a bag, puts it on his head, and upon putting the hat on his head, behaves like the new character he had assumed. He then indicates that he wants other students to do so. A number of students volunteer to wear the hats. There is a lot of playfulness. The teacher turns to the students wearing the hats and asks them to read a portion of the dialogue, imagining that they are the character whose hat they wear. Then another group of students wear the hats and continue reading the script. Students enjoy the game and read their lines dramatically. So, **dramatisation** is a valuable way of playfully activating the materials. It is believed that **fantasy** reduces barriers to learning.

The teacher also leads the class in various other activities involving the dialogue, for example repetition, question and answer, etc. so that students do not repeat a fixed set of sentences. **Novelty** is important and it facilitates learning.

In one such activity, the teacher teaches the students a children's song and the learners happily sing it. This is indicative of another important characteristic of Suggestopedia, **infantilisation**. The children's song helps students to adopt a childlike role and have a childlike attitude, which will make them more open to learning.

In another activity the teacher and students play a question and answer game with a ball. After standing up and getting in a circle, the teacher throws the ball to one of the students and asks a question such as 'what is your name?' The student who catches the ball answers the question according to his new identity. The teacher indicates to the student that he should throw the ball to another student while posing a question to him. The aim of this is to create an atmosphere of play, in which the conscious attention of the students is not focused on linguistic forms, but on using the language to communicate meanings.

When a student makes an error by using an ungrammatical sentence like 'how old you?', the teacher ignores the error. But later, when it is his turn to pose a question, he poses the correct question structure 'how old are you?' to the student

who had made the mistake. This means that **errors are tolerated** and corrected unobtrusively. The emphasis is on content, not form.

For homework, the teacher asks students to read the dialogue once before going to bed at night and once before getting up in the morning. At these times, the distinction between the conscious and the subconscious is blurred; therefore, optimal learning can occur.

Review of the principles and characteristics

In short, Suggestopedia stands for the following principles and characteristics:

1. The most conspicuous characteristics of Suggestopedia include the decoration, furniture and arrangement of the classroom, and the use of music. Learning is facilitated in a relaxed environment.
2. Students take advantage of peripheral learning.
3. The teacher is the authority. Students should trust and respect the teacher.
4. Learning is affected by suggestion (suggesting positive feelings and desuggesting negative feelings). Activating learners' imagination aids learning.
5. Assuming a new identity enhances the students' feeling of security.

6. Speaking communicatively is emphasised. The goal of the teacher is to enable learners to use language for everyday communication.
7. Grammar is presented explicitly but minimally. Vocabulary is emphasised.
8. Meaning is made clear through translation.
9. Learning can occur both consciously and subconsciously. When the distinction between the conscious and the subconscious is blurred, optimal learning can occur.
10. A pseudo-passive state can reduce the feelings of anxiety.
11. Fantasy and dramatisation reduce barriers to learning.
12. The fine arts (like music, drama, etc.) enable suggestions to reach the subconscious.
13. Students should not memorise fixed scripts. Novelty aids acquisition.
14. Infantilisation, adopting a childlike role, makes learners more open to learning.
15. More emphasis is placed on content than form. So, errors are tolerated and not corrected immediately.
16. Initially, most of the interactions between the teacher and students are initiated by the teacher. Later on, there will be more student initiations. Students interact with each other from the

beginning in various activities directed by the teacher.

17. A great deal of attention is given to students' feelings because the students' feeling of self-confidence is essential for obtaining success.
18. Culture is the everyday life of the people who speak the target language.
19. There are no formal tests because tests induce anxiety and threaten the relaxed atmosphere considered essential for accelerated learning. Evaluation is conducted based on the students' performance in the class.

Evaluation of the method

The relevant literature shows that there are mixed feelings about Suggestopedia. On the one hand, there are techniques and procedures in Suggestopedia that may prove useful in the language classroom. To name just a few, some of these features include the relaxed environment, peripheral learning, subconscious as well as conscious learning, emphasis on students' feeling, etc.

On the other hand, Suggestopedia has been criticised on a number of fronts. For one thing, the practicality of using this method is an issue where music, comfortable chairs, and posters are not

available. More serious is the issue of the place of memorisation in language learning. Many are convinced that Lozanov's innumerable references to 'memorisation' to the exclusion of 'understanding' could imply that Suggestopedia is an attempt to teach memorisation techniques and is not devoted to the more comprehensive question of language acquisition. Moreover, the application of Suggestopedia requires a special kind of relationship between the teacher and students, a relationship in which students trust and respect the teacher's authority without question. It is unclear what happens if the relationship is not that of complete trust and respect. In addition, this method does not easily lend itself to various kinds of textbooks.

To conclude, it is obvious that Suggestopedia does not signify the last word in language teaching. We must, as language teachers, try to extract only those techniques that are insightful and fruitful, then adapt those insights to our own teaching contexts.

Chapter 9

Community Language Learning (CLL)

Background

Community Language Learning (CLL), which represents the use of the more general Counselling-Learning theory to language teaching, was developed by Charles A. Curran. It is an example of a **'humanistic approach'** to teaching and learning. In a humanistic approach, learners are considered **'whole persons'**. This means that teachers should consider not only the cognitive aspect of the learners, but also their affective and social aspects. In other words, apart from cognitive factors, there are psychological and sociological factors that may influence learning. Teachers must be aware of and sensitive to such factors. Among the social factors influencing language learning is the kind of relationships between learners in the

class (the classroom atmosphere). Curran believes that adult learners bring with themselves certain feelings of anxiety to language classrooms because they often feel threatened by a fear that they may make mistakes and appear foolish. The fear of making mistakes is aggravated when the relationship between learners is not very friendly and students feel alienated.

To consider the psychological factors affecting learning, CLL also draws on the counselling metaphor to redefine the roles of the teacher (the counsellor) and learners (the clients) in the classroom. The threat of the teacher's authority is removed by turning him into a counsellor who will provide help only when the client needs and asks for it.

CLL reflects the basic principles of counselling in which the counsellor, through careful attention to client's needs aids the client in moving from total dependence to full independence.

Theory of language

The theory of language to which CLL subscribes is '**language as social process**'. According to the 'language as social process'

model, communication is more than just a message being transmitted from a speaker to a listener. The speaker is at the same time both subject and object of his own message. Communication is an exchange which is incomplete without the feedback from the destinee of the message. In this model, language is people; language is persons in contact; language is persons in response (La Forge, 1983:9). In simple terms, language is for communication. The focus shifts from grammar to a sharing and belonging between persons. Curran also believes language is for creative thinking.

Theory of learning

CLL advocates a **holistic approach** to language learning, or **whole-person learning** in which it is believed that ‘true’ human learning is both cognitive and affective. It is further believed that such learning takes place in a communicative situation where teachers and learners are involved in an interaction in which both experience a sense of their own wholeness.

In CLL, the process of learning a new language is like being reborn and developing a new persona, with all the trials and challenges that are

associated with birth and maturation. Language learning is thought to develop through creating supportive social relationships between learner and teacher, and learner and learner. Learning is viewed as a unified, personal, and social experience.

A group of ideas concerning the psychological requirements for successful learning are collected under the acronym **SARD**, in which:

S stands for **security**, emphasising the need for a feeling of security in order for learners to enter into a successful learning experience.

A stands for **attention** and **aggression**. In order to learn successfully, students need to focus their attention on the materials and be willing to use the new knowledge as a tool for self-assertion.

R stands for **retention** and **reflection**. Since learning and the processing of information takes time, students must be able to retain the new information into their brain at an activated and aroused stage to allow the brain to process the information until the new information is internalised. Reflection is a conscious process of focusing on one's own learning and re-evaluating future goals.

D stands for **discrimination**. This is when students have retained a body of materials and are ready to sort out how one thing relates to another.

In a nutshell, the learning philosophy in CLL addresses not the cognitive and psycholinguistic processes involved in second language acquisition, but rather the personal commitments that learners need to make before language acquisition processes can operate (Richards and Rodgers, 1986).

Description

Since CLL is one of the methods in which building a relationship with and among students is very important, students sit on chairs that are in a circle around a table so that every student can have eye contact with every other student. If students can see each other face to face, sooner or later some sort of friendship will develop among them. To help establish relationship, the teacher and students introduce themselves and greet each other in their native language. Then the teacher explains to the class what they are going to do. This is to reduce the anxiety of the learners and increase their feeling of security. Any new learning experience can be threatening. When students have an idea of what is

going to happen, they feel more secure, and feeling of security improves their learning.

The teacher tells the class that they are going to have a conversation in English (the target language). This shows that in CLL, language is for communication. To reduce the anxiety of the learners, he also tells them that there is no textbook. The conversation that students have with each other will be transcribed and used as the textbook.

The teacher does not sit among the students, nor does he stand in front of them. He stands behind the students because the superior power and authority of the teacher can be threatening. By not remaining in front of the classroom, the teacher removes the threat. This also fosters interaction among students rather than from teacher to student or vice versa.

The teacher explains how the students are to have the conversation, which is as follows:

Students are supposed to ask each other questions and answer the questions posed to them in English. But they do not know how. This is when the counsellor (teacher) comes to help. If a student wants to say something, he raises his hand. The teacher goes behind him. The student says what he

wants to say in his native language, and the teacher gives him the English translation. There is a tape recorder on the table. When the student feels that he is ready, he switches on the microphone and puts the English sentence on the tape and turns the switch off. Then the student who was asked the question raises her hand to answer. The teacher goes behind her and she says what she wants to say in her native language, and the teacher provides her with the English translation. If the sentence is long and the student has difficulty imitating it, the teacher gives the translation in phrases or chunks in order not to overwhelm the student with more than she can handle. When the student feels she is ready, she turns the switch on and puts the phrases or chunks on the tape one by one and turns the switch off.

The conversation goes on like this, with students saying things in their mother tongue and the teacher translating them into English and the students putting on the tape the English phrases or sentences. Every few minutes, the teacher announces the remaining time left for the conversation. Students feel more secure when they know the limits of an activity.

At the end of the conversation, to respect the students' feelings and to consider them as whole-persons, the teacher invites students to express their feelings about the experience. Students may have various responses. The teacher accepts what each student says. Since he is like a counsellor, it is crucial for the teacher to create an accepting atmosphere in which learners feel free to lower their defences and overcome their negative feelings, which might otherwise block their learning.

The teacher then plays the tape, and students listen to their own voices and reflect on the experience they had. This may increase the learner's motivation because they feel that the target language is not a subject matter to learn about. They come to realise that whatever they learn, can be put to immediate use in communication. An additional benefit of students listening to their own voices speaking English is that they realise that speaking in a foreign language is not difficult, after all. This realisation further reduces their anxiety.

Next, the teacher has students form a semicircle in front of the classroom board so every one can easily see the board. He plays the tape

again and pauses the tape at the end of each sentence. He asks students if they can translate the sentences. The sentences are written on the board along with their translations. So, the students' native language is used to make meaning clear. Students feel more secure when they understand everything. Moreover, the fact that the teacher asks students to form a semicircle, plays and pauses the tape, and transcribes the conversation, indicates that although he acts more like a counsellor than a teacher, he should nevertheless take responsibility for structuring activities in the most appropriate way possible for successful learning.

For the next activity, the teacher tells the students that he will act as a human computer. Both the English conversation and its translation are now available for the learners. But some students might have problems with the pronunciation of words and phrases. The '**human computer**' activity is designed to help learners to improve their pronunciation. The teacher tells learners they can use him as a computer to practice the pronunciation of any word or phrase within the conversation. Each student can pronounce any part of the conversation in his/her own way, and the human

computer (the teacher) gives the correct pronunciation. Or if they cannot pronounce the English word or phrase, they can say its translation in their native language, and the human computer provides the pronunciation.

It is important to note that the students control the human computer, not the other way round. The students can click on any part of the conversation as many times as they want or need until they are satisfied with their own pronunciation. Another point is that the human computer provides the normal pronunciation at the normal rate without any deliberate pronunciation or explanation as to where students have difficulty and how they can improve their pronunciation. This shows that the teacher encourages student independence. Students should learn to develop their inner criteria and wisdom and to take responsibility for their own learning. It is held that students learn best when they feel in control and have a choice in what they practice.

After the human computer activity, the teacher divides the students into several groups and asks them to work in their groups to create new sentences based on the words and phrases of the

transcript. Having created their sentences, students read them to the other members of the class. The aim of this activity is to help students to feel a sense of community and to realise that developing a community among the class members builds trust and helps to reduce the threat of the new learning situation. In other words, **cooperation, not competition** is encouraged.

Of course, before the students read their sentences for the whole class, the teacher walks from one group to another and offers help and corrects their mistakes in a non-threatening way.

At the end of the class, the teacher plays the tape one or two more times for the students to listen. Then, he invites them to talk about their learning experience.

In the following sessions, there will be other conversations that will be transcribed and worked on. This indicates that in the early stages, there is no pre-determined syllabus. The syllabus is designed primarily by the students. In the later stages, to prevent mere repetition of previous conversations, the teacher can bring about a topic and ask students to talk about that topic.

Review of the principles and characteristics

1. The goal of the teachers who use the CLL is to help their students learn how to use the target language communicatively. In addition, they want their students to learn about their own learning and take increasing responsibility for it. They also want their students to learn in a non-defensive way.
2. The teacher's initial role is that of a counsellor. It means that the teacher recognises how threatening a new learning situation can be for adult learners, and understands and supports them in their struggle to master the target language. Initially, learners are the 'clients' of the teacher. They are very dependent on him. But little by little, they move from dependency to independency.
3. The CLL method is neither fully teacher centred, nor student centred, but teacher-student centred, with both being decision makers in the class.
4. The teacher's use of the students' native language, telling them precisely what they are going to do, respecting established time limits, giving students only as much language at a time as they can handle, and respecting student's feelings all indicate the importance of providing for **student security**.
5. Language is for communication; culture is integrated with language.
6. The most important skills are understanding and speaking the language. Reading and writing are also

worked on, but only after the students have already understood the oral language. From among language components, particular grammar points, pronunciation, and vocabulary are all worked on based on the language the students have generated.

7. The students' native language is used in the classroom to make meaning clear and to enhance the students' security.
8. Since exams are anxiety-inducing, there may be no formal evaluation. But if a school requires that the students take a test at the end of the course, it would likely be more of an integrative test than a discrete-point one. Also, it is likely that teachers would encourage their students to self-evaluate.
9. Errors are corrected in a non-threatening way.
10. The teacher stands behind the students to reduce the threat of his superior knowledge and to foster interaction among students.
11. Teacher and students are whole persons.
12. The teacher encourages student initiative and independence.
13. Co-operation rather than competition is encouraged.
14. Initially, the syllabus is designed primarily by the students.

Evaluation of the method

There are both advantages and disadvantages to a method like CLL. One of the obvious advantages of this method is that it is very

responsive and sensitive to the students' security and communicative intent. CLL is an attempt to overcome some of the affective problems in second language learning. It centres on the learner and stresses the humanistic side of language learning. The threat of the superior power and knowledge of the teacher, the threat of making mistakes in front of the classmates, and the threat of competing against peers, which can lead to feelings of alienation, are presumably removed.

The fact that the counsellor allows the learner to determine the type of conversation gives the learners a sense of responsibility and to some extent a feeling of security and self-confidence.

But there are some theoretical and practical problems with CLL too. Theoretically, critics of CLL question the appropriateness of the counselling metaphor upon which it is predicated, asking for evidence that language learning in classrooms indeed parallels the processes that characterise psychological counselling. Moreover, counselling usually requires special training, and questions arise as to whether teachers should attempt counselling without special training.

There are other concerns regarding the lack of a syllabus, which makes objectives unclear and evaluation difficult to accomplish

Another potential problem with CLL is its reliance upon an inductive strategy of learning. The focus on fluency rather than accuracy may lead to inadequate control of the grammatical system of the target language.

Apart from these theoretical concerns, there are some practical problems too. CLL places unusual demands on language teachers. They have to be highly proficient in the language. Optimally, they must be perfect bilinguals so that they can translate everything the learners say on the spot.

The teacher's job is also made difficult because the teacher must operate without conventional materials. The teacher must also be prepared to deal with potentially hostile learner reactions to the method.

Last, but not least, CLL is only suitable for small classes. Classes with a large number of students might not find CLL very useful and practical.

Chapter 10

Total Physical Response

Background

Total Physical Response (TPR) is a method of language teaching developed by James Asher. It is built around the **coordination of speech and action**. Asher believed that children acquiring their first language appear to do a lot of listening before they speak, and that their listening is accompanied by physical responses. So, TPR attempts to teach language through physical activity.

TPR draws on several traditions and combines a number of insights in its rationale. First of all, it is linked to a movement in foreign language teaching sometimes referred to as the **comprehension approach** of Winitz, in which the basic premise is that students should not be forced to speak until they have the pre-requisite language elements in their minds to support speech production. In other words, the proponents of the

comprehension approach believe that speech emerges naturally and should not be forced. They insist that teachers should emphasise listening comprehension prior to speaking because that is the natural sequence of the development of these skills in child language acquisition.

Furthermore, no translation is used in TPR because that is not the way children acquire their mother tongue. But how is meaning made clear? To make meaning clear, the TPR method associates language with physical actions and actions make meaning clear. To associate language with physical activity, the **imperative** is used as the basic teaching technique. Asher claims that speech directed to young children consists primarily of commands, to which children respond physically before they begin to produce verbal responses.

The TPR method is similar to the comprehension approach in that they both favour a silent period at the beginning of language learning, and recommend that students be required not to talk before they are ready to talk. They both stress that students should comprehend everything that they hear.

By associating language with physical activity and adopting an action-based teaching strategy, the TPR method is also linked to **Gouin's series method**, which was designed on the premise that **a series of simple actions** associated with language will be easily retained by learners. Gouin advocated a situationally-based teaching strategy in which **a chain of action verbs** served as the basis for introducing and practicing new language items.

The TPR method also draws on another movement that is now known as the **natural approach** because Asher feels that adults should recapitulate the processes by which children acquire their mother tongue. To have a clearer understanding of the natural approach, however, it is necessary to have a look at the closely associated 'monitor model' of Krashen.

Krashen's **monitor model** is a theoretical model with 5 hypotheses formulated to explain how individuals develop second language skills. To be more precise, the monitor model can be used to explain why adult second language learning is not as successful as first language acquisition. There are five major differences between adult second language learning and child first language

acquisition, each of which is expressed by one of the five hypotheses of the monitor model.

The five hypotheses include the following;

1. acquisition/learning hypothesis
2. natural order hypothesis
3. monitor hypothesis
4. input hypothesis
5. affective filter hypothesis

The first hypothesis is the **acquisition/ learning hypothesis**. According to this hypothesis, there are two ways of internalising the knowledge of language. Individuals may acquire a second language just like children acquiring their mother tongue, or they may learn it. **Acquisition** refers to the **subconscious** picking up of the rules of language. This kind of internalisation of language is associated with second language learners in out-of-class situations. On the other hand, **learning** occurs when the learners **consciously** attend to the rules of language, which are often explicitly presented to them in in-class situations and in academic settings. In other words, acquisition is the implicit internalisation of the knowledge of language

while learning requires explicit attention on the rules of language.

Krashen claims that only acquisition can lead to communicative production. That is, students cannot learn to communicate because communicative language skills can only be acquired; they cannot be learnt. This is one reason why second language learners in in-class situations are less fluent and communicative than those in out-of-class situations. This is because most teachers and students focus their attention on language learning (the conscious knowledge of the rules) rather than on acquisition. Krashen believes that teachers should encourage as much implicit learning (acquisition) as possible. He claims that with the right type of training adults can acquire a second language in academic settings, and that the acquired system can serve to initiate all language utterances.

The second hypothesis is the **natural order hypothesis**, according to which both children and adults acquire grammatical structures in a predictable order. This means that when language learning occurs naturally, some

grammatical points are acquired early and some late. However, in academic second language learning situations, this natural order is not always observed. Grammatical points are sequenced and presented based on the teacher's or syllabus designer's perceptions of their difficulty, not based on their natural difficulty. This might lead to certain problems for language learners because the sequence of the grammatical structures presented in the class may not be compatible with the natural order of the difficulty of those structures. Consequently, second language learners may be presented with certain grammatical points for which they are not naturally ready. This is when learning problems emerge.

The third hypothesis is the **monitor hypothesis**, which deals with the function of the conscious grammatical knowledge. It was mentioned that only acquisition leads to production. One may ask, 'what is the use of conscious grammatical knowledge, then?' Krashen maintains that the conscious knowledge of rules has only limited use in normal speech. It can serve the learner only as a monitor or editor

to screen what the speaker intends to say, or to edit what s/he said. Krashen holds that individuals can use their monitor to increase their competence, but they cannot use it in performance itself. Krashen divides monitor users into three types of **over users**, **optimal users**, and **under users**, depending on how much they activate their monitor.

The fourth hypothesis is the **input hypothesis**, which states that individuals acquire language by understanding language that is slightly above their current level of competence. According to Krashen, to be comprehensible, input must be at (i+1) level of difficulty, in which i refers to the learners' level of competence. In natural first language acquisition, the input children receive is automatically comprehensible because adults naturally gear their language to the level of children's comprehension ability by using what is variably known as **motherese**, **caretaker speech**, **baby talk**, etc. In second language learning situations, on the other hand, the input is not necessarily comprehensible to learners, despite the fact that teachers also use a special

variety of simplified language known as **teacher talk**.

The fifth hypothesis is the **affective filter hypothesis**. According to this hypothesis, adult second language learners bring certain fears and worries with them to the language classrooms. As a result of these anxieties and worries, they develop certain negative attitudes that result in a mental block or affective filter. This psychological barrier inhibits their learning.

Owing to these five major differences, adult language learning is not as successful as child language acquisition. In fact, according to the **similarity-deficit model**, although children and adults go through similar processes in language learning, adults do everything less well.

Krashen and Terrell (1983) used the principles of Krashen's monitor model to develop a mentalistic approach to language teaching and learning that came to be known as the natural approach. The **natural approach** has five principles corresponding to the five hypotheses of the monitor model. The five **principles of the natural approach** include the following:

1. The goals of language learning and teaching are communicative. Language teachers are to focus students' attention on meaning rather than language forms and structures.
2. Comprehension precedes production. The starting point in language learning is comprehensible input.
3. Students should be allowed to begin producing language in stages (follow the natural order).
4. Acquisition activities rather than learning activities should be emphasised in the classroom.
5. Classroom activities should be of a type that lower the students' affective filter.

In the natural approach, a distinction is made between 'binding' and 'access'. **Binding** refers to the cognitive and affective mental process of linking a meaning to a form, and **access** is defined as the production of an appropriate form to express a specific meaning.

Finally, TPR is linked to the '**trace theory**' of memory in psychology, which holds that the more often or more intensively a memory

connection is traced, the stronger the memory association will be and the more likely it will be recalled (Richards & Rodgers, 1986:87). Retracing can be done verbally (e.g., by repetition) or by association with physical activity. Combined tracing activities such as verbal rehearsal accompanied by motor activity increase the probability of successful recall.

Theory of language

The activities of the TPR classroom indicate that the method is built on **structuralist** or grammar-based views of language. Asher states that most of the grammatical structures of the target language and hundreds of vocabulary items can be learnt from the skilful use of the imperative by the instructor. Asher also refers to the fact that language can be internalised as wholes or **chunks** rather than single lexical items. Furthermore, since TPR is closely linked to the 'Natural Approach', the oral modality is primary, just as with the acquisition of the native language. So, the general objectives of TPR are to teach oral proficiency at a beginning level.

Theory of learning

The learning theory of the TPR method is basically reminiscent of the **behaviouristic** psychologists' view of stimulus-response type of learning. The difference is that in TPR, students respond **physically** rather than verbally to verbal stimuli. That is to say, when a verbal stimulus is introduced (the teacher's command), students respond not by repetition or verbal production but by performing a physical action. One more difference is that although the activities and their ordering is similar to the behaviouristic views of habit-formation, students in TPR do not develop mechanical habits; they understand the meaning.

The TPR method is also seen as directed to **right-brain learning**, whereas most second language teaching methods are directed to **left-brain learning**.

Description

In the first session of a TPR class, the teacher explains (in the students' native language) what the students are supposed to do. He explains that the students do not have to speak any target language;

all they need to do is watch the teacher and follow his actions.

As the lesson begins, the teacher says some simple imperative sentences (commands) such as '*stand up*', '*turn around*', '*raise your hand*', etc. and performs the actions himself. Students only watch. This shows that in TPR, **meaning is conveyed through actions**. It also shows that beginning foreign language instruction should address the right hemisphere of the brain, which controls non-verbal behaviour. Meanwhile, language should be presented in chunks, not word by word. That is why the teacher uses sentences.

Then the teacher asks a group of volunteer students to come to the front of the class and do the actions with him. The teacher issues the commands one by one and performs them himself, and signals to the volunteer students to do the same. When he feels that students have no problem doing the actions, he introduces some new commands and the volunteers perform the actions with him.

Next, The teacher sits down and issues the commands to the volunteers and they perform the actions. Of course in the early stages, the teacher may facilitate students' comprehension by issuing a

series of commands requiring actions that are done consecutively to complete an activity, such as *'stand up'*, *'walk to the door'*, *'touch the door'*, *'open the door'*, *'close the door'*, *'turn round'*, *'walk to the chair'*, *'sit down'*. Such a series of commands is called an **operation**. This way, students feel successful, and the feeling of success and low anxiety facilitate learning.

However, this does not mean that students memorise fixed routines. When the teacher is satisfied that the volunteers have mastered the commands, he changes the order of the commands. He also gives the students commands that they have not heard before so that the students develop flexibility in understanding novel combinations of target language chunks. In other words, novelty is motivating because learning is not habit-formation. When students make a mistake, the teacher simply repeats the command while acting it out. So, errors are corrected in an unobtrusive manner.

Sometimes, the teacher combines parts of the already practiced commands to produce a funny new command. For example, supposing that the students have learnt to respond to *'raise your leg'* and *'put your book on the desk'*, the teacher might

say *'put your leg on the desk'*. The aim of such commands is to make learning more fun. Language learning is more effective when it is fun.

The teacher then addresses the whole class, who were only observing and doing nothing. He issues the commands and the whole class responds. This indicates that students learn not only by performing the actions but also by observing. To make sure that the students comprehend the commands and do not simply imitate the behaviour of their peers, the teacher also issues commands to individual learners.

When the teacher is satisfied with the way the students respond to his commands, he writes the commands on the board, while acting them out. This means that spoken language should be emphasised over written language.

As you may have noticed, all through the class, the students just responded physically to the teacher's command without saying anything. Only a few weeks later may students begin to issue commands to other students or the teacher. In fact, one of the basic principles of TPR, borrowed from the comprehension approach, is that **speech**

emerges. Students will begin to speak when they are ready.

Review of the principles and characteristics

The TPR method stands for the following principles and characteristics:

1. TPR is a natural method.
2. The general objective of TPR is to teach oral proficiency at a beginning level. Comprehension is a means to an end, and the ultimate aim is to teach basic speaking skills. Spoken language is emphasised over written language.
3. This method is directed to right brain learning. Meaning is conveyed through actions.
4. TPR requires initial attention to meaning rather than to form of items. Grammar is taught inductively.
5. Imperative drills are the major classroom activity.
6. Speaking emerges when students are ready.
7. The teacher is the director of all student behaviour. Students have the primary roles of listener and performer. They are imitators of the teacher's nonverbal model.
8. Low anxiety facilitates learning. One way of reducing anxiety is to make language learning as enjoyable as possible. The use of zany commands and humorous skits make language learning more fun.

9. Formal evaluation can be conducted simply by commanding individual students to perform actions.
10. Errors are seen as the natural outcome of learning. Therefore, teachers are tolerant of student errors and only correct major errors.

Evaluation of the method

The TPR method has received both positive and negative reactions. One of the advantages of TPR is the silent period of comprehension before production, which makes the method a natural method. Another point of strength of this method is combining right-brain and left-brain learning by accompanying language with physical actions. Still another advantage is that it eliminates the need for translation because meaning is made clear by actions. Other advantages of TPR include the relaxed low-anxiety learning, the use of fun, and unobtrusive correction of errors.

Despite these advantages, there have been some negative reactions in the relevant literature to some of the Total Physical Response techniques. Some authorities criticise the TPR principle that students should not be encouraged to speak until they are ready to do so. They say ‘what if some students never feel they are ready to speak’. The

TPR method borrows this principle from Krashen's input hypothesis, which states that all teachers can and should do is to provide comprehensible input. The critics of this hypothesis, including the **interactionists**, avow that for successful development of language knowledge, comprehensible input alone is necessary but insufficient. What is needed is a mutual interaction in which the learner both receives and produces language.

There are others who believe that it is not possible to teach all grammatical features of language through the imperative. Meanwhile, some others are concerned that overlooking certain student errors in the beginning stages may lead to the **fossilisation** of those errors.

Probably the most important shortcoming of the TPR method is that it is suitable only for the beginning levels of language learning. There are so many abstractions in any language that cannot be conveyed through physical activity. Asher's response to this obvious shortcoming is that teachers can delay the teaching of abstractions until students have internalised a detailed cognitive map of the target language. Once students have

developed a certain level of language knowledge, abstractions can be introduced and explained in the target language. Nevertheless, these remarks are criticised on two grounds. First, Asher faces the question “Are tense, aspect, articles, and so forth abstractions, and if so, what sort of ‘detailed cognitive map’ could be constructed without them?” (Richards & Rodgers, 1986: 88) Second, even if we assume that the cognitive map can be constructed without any knowledge of abstractions, the moment we turn to explanation or other means of conveying meaning other than physical activity, the TPR method will see its own demise because that would be against everything that TPR stands for.

Chapter 11

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Background

It was mentioned in chapter 1 that in the cognitive approach to language teaching, most of the methods take as their primary goal developing linguistic competence in the learners. That is, they emphasise the learning of grammatical structures, vocabulary, and so on. In the **communicative approach** to language teaching, which is based on sociolinguistics (pragmatics) and functional psychology, it is believed that the knowledge of the formal properties of language, although necessary, is inadequate for successful communication. In the communicative approach, a distinction is made between language usage and language use. Language **usage** refers to one's knowledge of the rules of language, including phonology, syntax, vocabulary, etc. Language **use**, on the other hand, refers to one's ability to make use of their

knowledge of the rules of language in real communication. The goal of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which borrows its theoretical principles from the communicative approach, is to develop in the learners communicative competence rather than linguistic competence.

The term **communicative competence** was coined in 1972 by Dell Hymes. It encompasses not only linguistic competence but also sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. The implication is that successful communication requires not only the knowledge of language itself (linguistic competence) but also awareness of how language is used in different contexts (sociolinguistic competence), how native speakers use linguistic and communication strategies to bridge the possible gaps in communication (strategic competence), and the ability to deal with language at supra-sentential or discourse level (discourse competence).

Instead of the traditional grammatical syllabus, CLT employs a **functional/notional** syllabus. **Functions** refer to the purposes for which people communicate, such as requesting,

apologizing, etc. **Notions** are defined as meanings that are expressed through linguistic forms, such as time, quantity, space, etc.

In short, the goal of the CLT is to enable learners to accomplish some functions, such as promising or arguing, and carry out these functions within a social context.

Howatt distinguishes between a strong and a weak version of communicative language teaching. The **strong version** of CLT advances the claim that language is acquired through communication; it entails '*using language to learn it*'. The **weak version**, which has become more or less standard practice in recent years, stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use the target language for communicative purposes. This version could be described as '*learning to use language*' (Richards & Rodgers, *op. cit.* : 66).

Theory of language

The theory of language underlying CLT is socio-linguistic in orientation, emphasising the role of context and other social factors in the use of language. In this regard, it is somehow similar to Schumann's '**acculturation model**' the essence of

which is that the more second language learners acquire the culture of the target language, the more successful they will be in second language learning.

CLT starts from a theory of language as communication. The goal of language teaching is to develop communicative competence rather than linguistic competence. Some of the characteristics of the communicative view of language include the following:

1. Language is a system for the expression of meaning.
2. The primary function of language is for interaction and communication.
3. The structure of the language reflects its functional and communicative uses.
4. The basic unit of language is not merely structural units, but categories of communicative meaning as exemplified in discourse.

Theory of learning

CLT borrows its learning theory from the **functional** view to learning in which the basic premise is that learning takes place only when the learner is able to do something with what they have learnt. In the case of language learning, Halliday's functional account of language use states that language learning means the ability to perform

speech acts or functions such as inviting, rejecting the invitation, etc.

The underlying learning theory in some CLT practices includes a number of elements. The first element is the **communication principle**, saying that activities that involve real communication promote learning. The second element is the **task principle** holding that activities in which language is used for carrying out meaningful tasks promote learning. The third element is the **meaningfulness principle** according to which language that is meaningful to the learner supports the learning process.

Description

In a class Larsen-Freeman (1986) describes, the teacher greets the students using the target language, and distributes a handout. The handout is a copy of a sports column from a recent newspaper. This shows the first principle of the method. Whenever possible, '**authentic language**' should be used, that is, language as it is used in real context.

Suppose that the passage is about the World Cup. The teacher tells the students to read the text

and underline the reporter's predictions about the teams. When the students have finished, they read what they have underlined, and the teacher writes the predictions on the board. There could be sentences such as the following:

In group 'D', Mexico and Portugal are very likely to progress to the second round.

Iran can have a chance if they play as well as they have recently.

Angola probably won't be a contender.

The purpose of this activity is to show students that functions are important, and being able to figure out the speaker's or writer's intentions is part of being communicatively competent.

Then the teacher asks students to look at each prediction and try to find another way of expressing the same prediction. Students propose alternative forms such as the following:

'Mexico and Portugal are almost certain to progress to the second stage of the Cup'.

'It is possible that Iran can go to the second round'.

'If Iranian football players play well, there is a possibility for Iran to progress to the second round.'

And so on.

All of the paraphrases are evaluated to make sure that they convey the same degree of certainty as the reporter's original prediction. This is done to raise the learners' awareness that there is no fixed one-to-one correspondence between form and function. One function can be expressed through different forms, and a single form can be used to express a range of different functions. In other words, in communicating, a speaker has a choice about not only what to say but also how to say it.

Then the teacher asks students to turn to the other side of the handout. On it are all the sentences of the article they have been working on. However, they are out of order. The teacher asks students to unscramble the sentences and put them in proper order. This is done so that students learn to work with language at the discourse or supra-sentential (above the sentence) level. They must learn about characteristics of discourse such as cohesion and coherence, which bind sentences together.

It should be noted that the teacher gives all directions for the activities in the target language because the target language is a vehicle for communication, not just the object of study.

Games are important in CLT because they have certain features in common with real communicative events, such as purposefulness, information gap, and immediate feedback. So, the teacher engages the students in a variety of games. In one such game, the teacher divides the class into small groups. He hands each group a deck of cards. Each card has a picture of a piece of sports equipment. The pictures are first shown to the students and the names of the equipments are introduced and written on the board: basketball, tennis racket, skis, roller skates, golf clubs, hockey stick, etc. The cards are shuffled and all the members of the group except one are dealt an equal number of cards. They don't show their cards to anyone. One card is placed face down in the middle of the group. One person in each group receives no card. This student is asked to predict what Arya (one of the students) will be doing the following weekend. The student with no card can make a prediction like '*Arya may go roller skating this weekend*'. The other students check their cards. If one of them has a card showing 'roller skates', s/he says '*No, Arya cannot go roller skating because I have got his roller skates*'. And the student with no

card makes another guess. If, on the other hand, no one has a card depicting roller skates, the student with no card can make a strong statement like '*Arya will go roller skating this weekend*'. She can check her prediction by turning over the card that was placed face down.

In another game, the teacher divides the class into small groups. One member of each group is given a picture strip story. A picture strip story is a number of pictures in a row that together tell a story. The student with the story shows the first picture to the other members of the group, while covering the others. The other students try to predict what they think will happen in the second picture. Then the second picture is shown, proving some predictions to be right and some wrong. Then students are asked to predict what the third picture will look like, and so on.

There can also be other games depending on the function that is being taught. For instance, if the function is guessing, one volunteer student may be asked to leave the class. In his absence, the class agrees on a name (name of a person or object). Then the volunteer is called back. He is to guess the name by asking 20 questions, to each of which

students can only reply with ‘yes’, ‘no’, or ‘I don’t know’. Or, in the absence of the volunteer, the class members may change the arrangement of objects or people. The volunteer is called back and asked to guess as many changes as s/he can in one minute. Then, other volunteers repeat the same game to see who can make a greater number of correct guesses or guesses the intended name asking fewer questions.

To raise the students’ consciousness of the fact that to perform language functions in different contexts and with different social relationships they need appropriate forms, students are also told to do a role-play. The teacher tells them to imagine that they are all employees of the same company. There is a meeting to discuss what will possibly occur as a result of their company merging with another company. They must remember that one of them is the boss, and they must consider their relationship with each other when they are discussing. For instance, if they want to disagree with the boss, they will need one form; but if they want to disagree with someone of lower rank, they will use another form to express their disagreement.

After the role-play is finished, the students elicit relevant vocabulary. So, the grammar and vocabulary that students learn follow from the function, situational context, and the roles of the interlocutors.

For their homework, students are to listen to a debate on the radio or watch it on television. This is because students should be given opportunities to develop strategies for interpreting language as it is actually used by native speakers. That is to say, even for homework, students should work with authentic language.

Before going to the review of the principles and characteristics, a couple of points are worth noting. One is that while the students are communicators and take part in various communicative activities, one of the major responsibilities of the teacher is to establish situations that are likely to promote communication. The second point is that when students communicate, they may well make mistakes. When a student makes a mistake, the teacher and other students ignore it. Errors are tolerated and seen as a natural outcome of the development of communication skills. Students'

success is determined as much by their fluency as it is by their accuracy.

Review of the principles and characteristics

Here are some of the principles and characteristics of CLT.

1. The goal of instruction is to make students communicatively competent.
2. The teacher is a facilitator of his students' learning. He is the manager of classroom activities. During the activities, he acts as an advisor. Sometimes, he may be a 'co-communicator' with the students. Students are communicators. Most of the interactions are between and among the students.
3. The feeling of the students is important. When students feel they are learning to do something useful with the language they study, they will be more motivated.
4. Language is for communication. Culture is the everyday life of the people.
5. Language functions are emphasised over forms. Typically, a functional syllabus is used.
6. The students' native language has no particular role. The target language is a vehicle for communication.
7. The teacher evaluates not only the students' accuracy, but also their fluency. For formal evaluation, the teacher is likely to use a

communicative test. This is an integrative test that has a real communicative function. In order to assess the students' writing skill, for instance, a teacher might ask them to write a letter to a friend.

8. Errors of form are tolerated and seen as a natural outcome of the development of communication skills.
9. Whenever possible, authentic language is used.
10. Students learn to work with language at discourse level.
11. The social context of the communicative event is essential in giving meaning to the utterances.
12. In communicating, a speaker has a choice about what to say and how to say it.
13. Activities that are truly communicative have at least three features: information gap, choice, and feedback.

Evaluation of the method

CLT is best considered an approach than a method. CLT appeals to those who seek a more humanistic approach to teaching, one in which the interactive processes of communication receive priority. The adoption of CLT is in line with the theoretical developments in the field of language teaching. Compared with the methods previously discussed, it enjoys more recent theories of language and learning. Furthermore, at the level of

techniques and procedures, it provides greater room for individual interpretation and variation than most methods permit. CLT is flexible and allows the use of anything that improves the students' communicative ability.

Nevertheless, as Swan (1985) puts it, now that the initial wave of enthusiasm has passed, some of the claims of CLT are being looked at more critically. According to Brown (1986), a lot of spontaneity is present in communicative classrooms. Students are encouraged to deal with unrehearsed situations under the guidance, but not control, of the teacher. This characteristic of CLT often makes it difficult for a non-native speaking teacher who is not very proficient in the second language to teach effectively.

The adoption of a communicative approach raises important issues for teacher training, materials development, and testing and evaluation. Some of the questions that have been raised include whether a communicative approach can be applied at all levels in a language programme, whether it is equally suited to ESL and EFL situations, whether it requires the existing grammar-based syllabuses to be abandoned or merely revised, how such an

approach can be adopted in situations where students must continue to take grammar-based tests (Richards & Rodgers, *op. cit.* : 83).

To these criticisms, two more points can be added. Whether CLT is applicable to large classes with many students, and whether emphasising fluency at the expense of accuracy is justifiable are issues that are yet unresolved.

Part IV

Beyond Methods

Chapter 12

Factors Influencing Second Language Learning

Background

Over the past half-century, the fortunes of language teaching methods have waxed and waned. The history of language teaching during this period seems to be a never-ending cycle of reactions to previously accepted ideas and methods, followed by the acceptance of those reactions and the advent of new ideas and methods, followed by another reaction.

Surprisingly enough, during these twists and turns, we have seen everything as either diabolically black or celestially white. Apparently, we have had no grey in our understanding of the

teaching methods. The history of language teaching is witness to an interesting story.

At the dawn of the modern history of language teaching, teachers used their own intuition and skills for teaching foreign languages. They were happy because at least they knew where they stood. But then came the so-called modern ideas, and the advent of these modern ideas saw the demise of the traditional ones.

Once teachers thought that grammar is important and must be explained. They also thought that the native language of the learners was the way to make meaning clear. Then came new ideas, saying that grammar should not be explicitly explained but rather presented inductively, and that mother tongue should not be used in the classroom.

What happened first thing the next morning was to ban all grammar explanations and translation (or the use of mother tongue for any other purposes) and consider these as colossal sins to be avoided at whatever cost.

Soon the inductive grammar presentation and the absolute use of the target language became the fashion of the day, only to last for a short while. The so-called new ideas very soon became old, and

other new ideas – sometimes diametrically opposed to the existing ones – emerged and the same story was repeated.

With new ideas, there came new methods, new techniques, and new teaching materials. And every time there was a new idea or method, the experts said, “This time, we have got it right”. The innocent teachers, who no longer had the self-confidence to rely on their own intuitions, had to be trained to use the new method with its peculiar techniques, teaching materials, and so forth.

Yet again, hardly had teachers acquainted themselves with the new method and its techniques, when new ideas arrived, requiring the existing method along with all its accompaniments to be thrown away. What this meant for teachers was that all their investment was down the drain. Teachers had become slaves of teaching methods.

The obvious consequence of this not so happy history is that in the past few decades, teachers have been swinging from one extreme position to another extreme position. They have been jumping hurriedly from total adherence to one method to absolute, unquestioning adherence to another method. Every time they have done this,

they have thrown out the baby with the bath water. Sight has been lost of the fact that there are germs of truth in every method, and that the old methods that are now denigrated in such humiliating terms, once looked as convincing and promising as the new ones.

What all this discussion boils down to is that this whole process needs a second thought. Teachers must stop jumping from one method to another in search of a magical method that can solve all sorts of learning problems. For one thing, such a search is futile because simply there is no such thing as the single best method. Second, what is more important is for the teachers to realise that not all learning problems are attributable to the methods of teaching. There are so many factors other than methodology that influence language learning. Since the future of language teaching rests in the hands of teachers, familiarity with these factors can help them to make more informed decisions. The aim of this chapter is to review the various factors or variables that may influence language learning.

Factors to consider

A multitude of factors influence the students' language learning. Some of these variables pertain to learners and some to instruction.

Learner variables

In language teaching, teachers are concerned with human learners. Human beings are multi-dimensional creatures. In earlier chapters, it was mentioned that learners should be considered as whole persons. This means that they have cognitive, affective, social, and biological aspects, each of which can influence their language learning.

A. Cognitive factors

The following are some of the cognitive factors that influence second language learning.

1. Process, style, and strategy

There has been a great deal of confusion in the use of these three terms in the literature. They are different, however, in technical terms. **Process** is the most general of the three concepts. It is a universal characteristic of every human being. For

example, **transfer** and **generalisation** are used universally in the process of second language learning.

Style refers to consistent and enduring tendencies or preferences within an individual. They are general characteristics that differentiate one individual from another. For example, some people are field dependent while some are field independent. **Field dependence** refers to the tendency to be dependent on the total field such that the parts embedded within the field are not easily perceived, although that total field is perceived more clearly as a unified whole. On the other hand, **field independence** is the ability to perceive a particular, relevant item in a field of distracting items. For example, field independent people can spot hidden monkeys camouflaged by the lines of a picture of a forest scene more easily than field dependent people. In second language learning, field independent learners are those who are good at memorising certain parts of a text without necessarily understanding the relationships between the different parts of the text. Field dependent learners, on the other hand, read the whole text, understand the general intention, but

may not be very good at memorising certain details of the text.

Another cognitive style is **left and right hemisphere dominance**. Some learners are left hemisphere dominant while others are right hemisphere dominant. Since the brain is lateralised and each hemisphere of the brain is responsible for certain kinds of processing, this style can have wide-ranging implications in language learning. For instance, some findings suggest that left-brain dominant second language learners prefer a deductive style of teaching, while right-brain dominant learners appear to be more successful in an inductive classroom environment.

The third cognitive style concerns the degree to which you are willing to tolerate ideas and propositions that run counter to your own structure of knowledge. It is called **tolerance of ambiguity**. Some people are more ‘open-minded’ in accepting facts and events that contradict their own views; others are more ‘closed-minded’. Learners who are flexible in the face of new evidence or new situations are called **sharpeners** and those who seem unable to change their previous mental set are called **levellers**. There are advantages and

disadvantages in each style. The person who is tolerant of ambiguity is free to entertain a number of innovative and creative possibilities. In second language learning, a great amount of apparently contradictory information is encountered. Successful language learning necessitates tolerance of such ambiguities. On the other hand, too much tolerance of ambiguity can have a detrimental effect. People accepting virtually every proposition before them can become ‘wishy-washy’.

Learning strategies are specific methods of approaching a problem or task. They are contextualised ‘battle plans’ that might vary from time to time and from person to person. For example, when reading a text, a learner may look up the meaning of all unknown words, or glean meaning through the use of cognates, word families, related roots, and inferencing. In doing grammatical exercises, students may consider the entire sentence or look for the cue word that enables them to give the correct answer.

2. Background knowledge

One of the most important cognitive factors influencing language learning is the

knowledge that students bring with them to the learning task. Obviously, if learners lack the sufficient background knowledge of vocabulary and grammar and language skills (specially listening and reading), they will be unable to comprehend the language they are exposed to.

3. Intelligence

Intelligence is probably the most important cognitive variable that influences language learning. Intelligence is the general learning ability. It goes without saying that with a low learning ability, one cannot expect a high level of achievement. Intelligence is like a seed. For a plant to flourish, environmental factors like water, sunshine, manure, etc. are immensely conducive. But without a seed, you will never have a plant, even if all other factors are present. Similarly, if all other learning conditions are met but learners are cognitively unable to cope with the demands of the learning situation, no great achievement can be expected.

4. Aptitude

Aptitude refers to the natural ability to learn something. Aptitude is different from intelligence in that intelligence is general ability whereas aptitude is specific learning ability. There are students who are intelligent and generally successful. But when it comes to a specific subject matter, say language learning, they suffer from some sort of disability and fail to perform in accord with the expectations. Conversely, there may be cases in which a student with only average level of intelligence shows a particular capability in learning a specific subject matter, like language. In such cases, it is sometimes said that the student has an 'ear' for language. This means that the student has aptitude for language learning.

B. Affective factors

Affect refers to emotion or feeling. The affective domain is the emotional side of human behaviour. According to recent psychological theories, affective factors play a larger role in developing second language skills than cognitive factors because the emotions control the will to activate or to shut down the cognitive functions.

Sometimes, students have normal cognitive ability but do not perform up to their maximum capacity or do more poorly than one would anticipate. Such students are referred to as **underachievers**. Some other students receive higher grades than one would expect based on their cognitive ability. These students are referred to as **overachievers**. This is due to the effect of psychological factors, some of which will be discussed below.

1. Self-concept

Learning a second language is a thorny task. For this very reason, successful completion of second language learning requires some degree of what is variably known as **self-concept**, **self-confidence**, or **self-esteem**. Self-concept refers to one's belief in one's own capabilities. The first step in venturing to learn a second language is to develop the belief that you are capable of doing so. There are three levels of self-esteem: global, situational, and task self-esteem. General or **global self-esteem** is relatively stable and resistant to change. **Situational** or specific self-esteem refers to one's appraisals of oneself in certain life situations, such as education, work, home, etc. **Task self-**

esteem refers to particular tasks within specific situations. For example, within the educational domain, task self-esteem might refer to particular subject matter areas (Brown, *op. cit.*).

2. Risk-taking

Closely related to the notion of self-concept is the concept of risk-taking. If one's self-concept is high, the willingness to take risks will be higher. And risk-taking is an important characteristic of successful second language learners. It must be noted, however, that too much impulsivity (willingness to guess) does not always yield positive results in second language learning. Successful language learners are moderate, not high risk-takers.

3. Anxiety

Owing to the natural difficulty of learning a second language, learners, especially adult learners, bring some sort of fear or anxiety with them to the learning situation. Like self-esteem, anxiety may be experienced at different levels. **Trait anxiety** is a more general and permanent predisposition to be anxious. **State anxiety** is more momentary or

situational level of anxiety that is experienced in relation to some particular event or situation. Anxiety is not always a negative attribute. It may be debilitating as well as facilitative. **Facilitative anxiety** is a desirable attribute since it leads to competitiveness and increased levels of effort. It is **debilitative anxiety** that reduces the self-esteem of the learners and causes them to build walls of inhibition to protect their weak and fragile ego, hence hindering language learning.

4. Attitude

Students attend language classes with a variety of attitudes toward the second language, the people who speak it, their culture, the teacher, and the class. They also bring with them attitudes towards second language learning itself. They might think that second language learning is impossible, boring, and useless. Conversely, they may think it is easy, interesting, and useful. The more positively students think about the second language and the people who speak it, the easier they will find the learning of that language.

5. Perseverance

Language learning is different from other academic subjects for a number of reasons. First, second language learners need not only to memorise vocabulary, learn about grammar, etc. but also to develop a new system of communication. Second, different stages of language learning are interdependent. That is, what is learnt in one stage must be retained and carried over to all subsequent stages. Third, learning does not occur overnight. Habits of procrastination brought from other classes in which it is possible to wait until the eve of the exam to cram the text and do well in the course lead to disastrous results in language learning. For these and other reasons, language learning requires a long, sustained commitment. Therefore, students need to be tolerant of these difficulties, not to get disappointed, and keep trying in spite of difficulties.

6. Internal versus external locus of control

Internal versus external locus of control has to do with the way students react to success or failure. **Internals** attribute success or failure to

their own ability and efforts; **externals** consider success or failure to be determined by forces over which they have little or no control. Internals blame themselves for failure, while externals fix the blame on the outside world (Chastain, *op. cit.*).

7. **Introversion versus extroversion**

Introverts are usually shy and reticent students who tend to be centred on the self. They are directed inward. **Extroverts** tend to be outgoing and aggressive. Extroversion is the extent to which a person has a deep-seated need to receive ego enhancement from other people as opposed to receiving that affirmation within oneself. Introverts may be more conscientious and more dedicated to the task. Extroverts seem to have an advantage with regard to developing their communication skill. They tend to participate more actively in class with less fear of risk-taking.

8. **Interests and needs**

Students tend to invest more time and effort in and to remember longer the material that relates closely to their interests as well as their needs. In fact, language learning that is significant to

students, either because of interest or because of needs, adds a depth dimension to the students' learning.

9. Motivation

Motivation is commonly thought of as an inner drive, impulse, emotion, or desire that moves one to a particular action. Motivation, like self-esteem, can be **global**, **situational**, or **task-oriented**. Language learning requires some of all three levels of motivation. Motivation is divided into two basic types: instrumental and integrative motivation. **Instrumental** motivation refers to motivation to acquire a language as a means for attaining instrumental goals such as finding a job, etc. **Integrative** motivation is one in which learners wish to integrate themselves within the culture of the second language group; to identify themselves with and become a part of that society.

A distinction is also made between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. This distinction has to do with the source of motivation. **Intrinsic** motivation generally stems from within oneself, whereas **extrinsic** motivation stems from outside, usually from other people.

C. Socio-cultural factors

Human beings are said to be social animals. They live in communities. Culture is the context within which we exist, think, feel, and relate to others. It is the 'glue' that binds a group of people together. Language is another 'glue' that binds people together. It is a common means of communication within a community, and members of a community use language as one way of identifying themselves with that community.

Language learning is influenced by socio-cultural factors. The following are some of the social and cultural factors that influence second language learning.

1. Cultural stereotypes

A stereotype is a category that singles out an individual as sharing assumed characteristics on the basis of his/her group membership. We view every person in a culture as possessing stereotypical traits. Thus, Americans are rich, informal, and materialistic. British are reserved, polite, and thrifty. Germans are stubborn, industrious, and methodical. Orientals are reserved, wise, and cunning.

Stereotyping usually implies some kind of attitude toward the culture or language in question. Positive attitudes are beneficial to second language learning and negative socio-cultural attitudes may lead to decreased motivation and hinder successful attainment of proficiency.

Negative attitudes usually emerge either from false stereotyping or from undue ethnocentrism.

2. Acculturation

Second language learning is often second culture learning. Acculturation refers to the process of acquiring, or becoming adapted to a new culture. Acculturation takes place in four stages. The first stage is excitement and **euphoria** over the newness of the surrounding. The second stage is **culture shock**, which emerges as individuals feel the cultural differences enter their own images of self and security. Culture shock may range from mild irritability to deep psychological panic and crisis. It might even cause some learners to drop out. The third stage is **anomie** or homelessness, in which one feels neither bound firmly to one's native culture nor fully adapted to the second culture. The

fourth stage is **adaptation** or **assimilation** to the second culture. Schumann, the originator of ‘acculturation model’, avows that second language learning will be successful only to the degree to which acculturation can be successfully accomplished.

3. Social distance

Closely related to the phenomenon of acculturation is the question of social distance. Social distance refers to the extent of proximity or closeness of two cultures that come into contact within the individual. ‘Distance’ refers to the degree of ‘dissimilarity’ between the learner’s native and target cultures. The greater the social distance between the two cultures, the deeper the feeling of shock will be, and the harder it will become for learners to develop a **sense of belonging** to the second culture.

4. Social context

All languages are normally learnt in social situations. The different social environments in which a second language is learnt influences the success of second language learning. For one thing,

the social environment of the second language classroom is unlike that of the real world. In the real world, language is acquired subconsciously, while in the second language classroom, language is learnt consciously. Second, there are differences between second language learning and foreign language learning situations. A second language learning is one in which the target language is available not only inside the classroom but also outside the classroom. In a country like Iran, English is learnt as a foreign language because English is not spoken in Iran. So, learners usually don't get exposed to it in real life situations outside the classroom.

D. Biological factors

There are two biological factors that influence the development of second language skills : age and sex.

1. Age

Traditionally, children are believed to be better second language learners than adults. Different reasons have been proposed to explain the superiority of child language learning over adult

language learning. Some theorists believe that children have an innate capacity to learn language (called Language Acquisition Device or LAD) that gradually disappears with age. Others hypothesise that the advantage children have is due to their greater psychological, social, and cognitive flexibility.

However, recent findings suggest that children have an advantage only in out-of-class learning situations and in acquiring a native accent. Adults appear to have an advantage learning languages in formal classroom settings. The advantage of adult language learning in formal settings may be attributed to the developed cognitive system.

2. Sex

Another traditional assumption is that females are better language learners than males. In fact, an observable phenomenon in informal second language acquisition is that females have got the upper hand in developing second language skills, especially in the areas of pronunciation and fluency. But is this the case with formal second language learning too? There are mixed findings in

this regard since studies carried out have reported conflicting results.

Apparently, second language learning of females is affected by several other factors including the traditional expectation of a higher achievement than males, cultural norms, and the amount of free time, to mention just a few.

Table 12.1 contains the summary of the learner variables that affect the development of second language skills.

Table 12.1 Learner variables affecting SL learning

Learner variables affecting the development of second language skills	Cognitive factors	Learning processes	Transfer
			Generalization
		Learning styles	Field dependence Vs field independence
			Left vs. right hemisphere dominance
			Tolerance of ambiguity
		Learning strategies	
		Background knowledge	
		Intelligence	
		Aptitude	
		Affective factors	Self-concept
	Risk-taking		
	Anxiety		
	Attitude		
	Perseverance		
	Internal vs. external locus of control		
	Introversion vs. extroversion		
	Interests and needs		
	Motivation		
	Socio-cultural factors	Cultural stereotypes	
		Acculturation	
Social distance			
Social context			
Biological factors	Age		
	Sex		

Instructional Factors

Apart from learner variables, there are factors pertaining to the teacher and instruction that have their influence on the learning of a second language. They are briefly reviewed below.

A. The teacher

Although according to the recent psychological theories, learning is considered to be superior to teaching and the pivotal role is given to the learners, teachers still have their role in paving the way for the students' successful development of second language skills. It is the teacher's responsibility to provide the best learning conditions for the learners. The extent to which they can accomplish this depends on several factors. The following teacher variables are among those that influence the success of second language learning classes.

1. Self-concept

It was mentioned that students must have self-concept to succeed in the thorny task of second language learning. In the same vein, teachers should have a strong and stable self-concept. If

teachers are unsure of themselves, it will not take long for students to recognise this hesitancy. And if this happens, they will be less likely to take the teacher and the class seriously.

2. Knowledge of the subject

Self-concept is dependent on the teacher's knowledge of the subject. If teachers are knowledgeable enough and are familiar with the latest developments in their field, they will naturally be self-confident. Lack of the knowledge of the subject, on the other hand, leads to the feelings of uncertainty and hesitancy.

3. Interpersonal skills

Having knowledge of the subject is a necessary condition for language teachers, but an insufficient one per se. There are teachers who are quite knowledgeable but cannot transmit their knowledge to their pupils. Therefore, just knowing the subject matter is one thing, being able to transmit one's knowledge to others is quite another. Only teachers are the most effective who can keep students interested, occupied, and reasonably content.

4. Diligence

Just as students must have perseverance, teachers need to be diligent. They should realise that teaching a language, much like learning it, requires a huge amount of time, energy, and diligence.

5. Standards

Standards refer to what teachers expect students to know or be able to do during and after instruction. Students respond to teachers' expectations. To make students achieve maximum success, teachers should set standards that require the students to work hard and do well. Care must be taken not to set standards that are too high or too low. Standards that are too low encourage students to put forth minimum effort, and those that are too high discourage students from making their maximum effort. In a nutshell, standards must be set high but never out of the students' reach.

B. Instruction

Characteristics of instruction including the goals of instruction, teaching materials (textbooks),

and organisation of the course may also influence second language learning.

1. Instructional goals

Teachers tend to prepare their students for certain objectives set by the educational officials. Some instructional goals stress usage, others stress use, and some both. Some stress accuracy, others fluency, and some both. Depending on what instructional goals are set, there will be different kinds of class activity and consequently different degrees of second language learning.

2. Textbooks

The content of textbooks and the organisation of the content also affect language learning. Some textbooks are replete with some boring, un-stimulating tests that stress grammatical points followed by a long array of uncommunicative mechanical drills. Others may have interesting, funny, and stimulating authentic materials followed by amusing communicative exercises. Sometimes, textbooks are in line with instructional goals, and sometimes they are in contradiction.

3. Course organisation

Organisation of the course refers to course **onset** (when the course begins), **intensity** (how many hours of instruction there is per week), and **length** (how long instruction continues in terms of semesters or educational years). Depending on when second language instruction begins, how long it continues, and how many hours of instruction there is per week, one can expect various degrees of success in second language learning.

Table 12.2 summarises the instructional factors that influence second language learning.

**Table 12.2 – Instructional factors affecting
Second language learning**

Instructional factors affecting second language learning	Teacher	Self-concept
		Knowledge of the subject
		Interpersonal skills
		Diligence
		Standards
	Instruction	Instructional goals
		Textbooks
		Course organisation

Conclusion

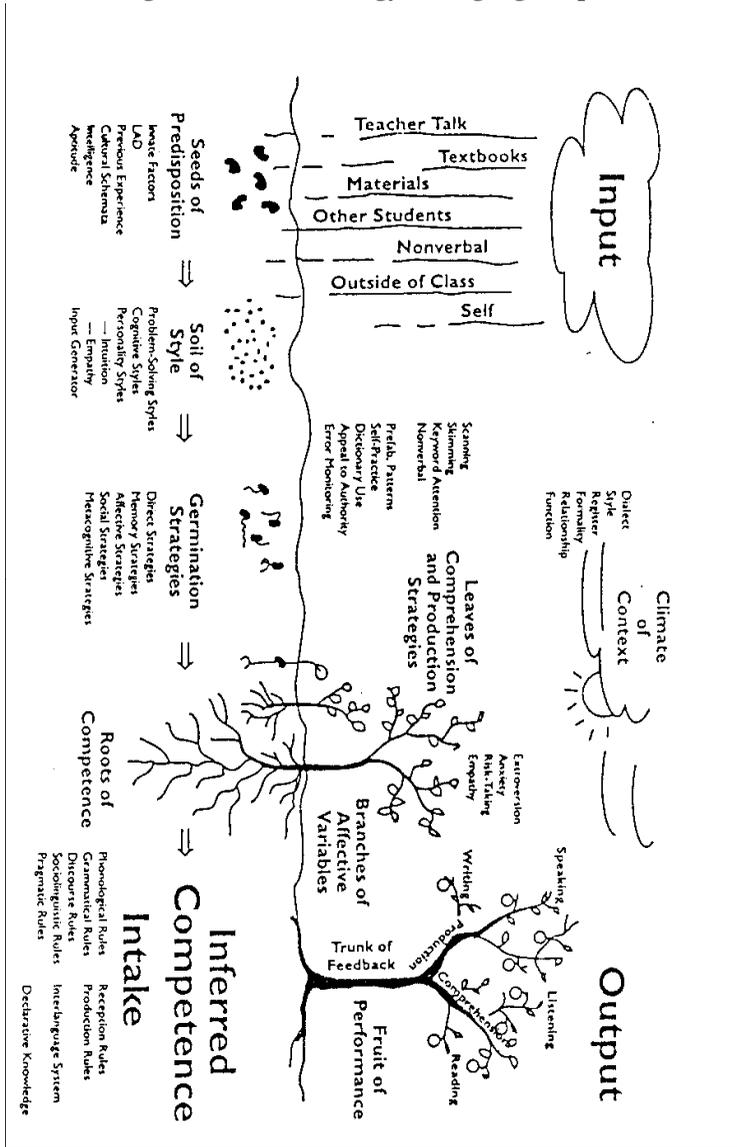
What this entire chapter boils down to is that whoever thinks successful language learning depends only on the teacher's method of teaching is way wrong. Successful development of second language skills depends on a multitude of factors, of which the method of teaching is only one. Teachers can achieve no considerable success in their profession if they fail to appreciate each of the factors discussed in this chapter and their influence on language learning. Brown (1994) depicts the role of these factors in figure 12.1, entitled 'the ecology of language acquisition'. The same figure can also be applied to language learning.

According to Brown, "the rain clouds of input stimulate seeds of predisposition (innate, genetically transmitted processes). But the potency of that input is dependent on the appropriate styles and strategies that a person puts into action (represented as soil). Upon the germination of language abilities (notice not all the seeds of predisposition are effectively activated), networks of competence (which, like underground roots, cannot be observed from above the ground) build and grow stronger as the organism actively engages

in comprehension and production of language. The resulting root system (inferred competence) is what we commonly call intake. ... Through the use of further strategies and affective abilities, coupled with the feedback we receive from others (note the tree trunk), we ultimately develop full-flowering communicative abilities. The fruit of or performance (or output) is of course conditioned by the climate of innumerable contextual variables” (1994: 295).

Brown adds that the horticulturist (the teacher) can irrigate to create better input, apply fertilizers for richer soil, encourage the use of strategies and affective enhancers and, in the greenhouse of our classrooms, control the contextual climate for optimal growth.

Figure 12.1 – the ecology of language acquisition



Part V

First Language Acquisition

Chapter 13

First Language Acquisition A Theoretical Perspective

Introduction

Since many second language learning theories and methods are based on the theories of first language acquisition, this concluding chapter is dedicated to a brief overview of a number of the theories of first language acquisition, some of which were referred to in the previous chapters.

Language acquisition does not take place in a vacuum. It encompasses a myriad of factors and a complicated network of relations between those factors. To try to explain all these factors and relationships is to ‘enter a dark forest indeed, not so much a question of not being able to see the wood for the trees, but one even cannot see the trees’. This is mostly due to the intrinsic difficulties involved in the thorny task of investigating the nature and

process of first language acquisition (henceforth FLA).

This should not be construed, however, as an endorsement of the idea that all attempts at discovering the nature of FLA are all in vain and should thus be abandoned altogether. William Littlewood justifies and reiterates the significance of studies focused on FLA by stating that our increased knowledge of FLA has served as a backcloth for perceiving and understanding new facts about second language learning. Moreover, he holds that many researchers now aim at producing a single ‘theory of acquisition’ which would account for both first and second language learning within a single framework. For, they believe that the two experiences are, after all, both manifestations of the general human capacity to learn and use language.

With the narrowing gap between theories and methods in the field of first and second language learning, a recurrent theme has been to consider the similarities and differences between the two fields. This chapter is an overview of some of the theories accounting for FLA, the hope being that a brief survey of the old and recent work in FLA will contribute to our understanding of second language

acquisition and present a clearer picture of language learning on the whole.

Theories and Approaches

Two of the major views to language acquisition are the behaviouristic and the innateness views. **Behaviourism** is deeply rooted in **empiricism** in philosophy where it is claimed that the source of human knowledge is experience. In other words, when human beings are born, their mind is a tabula rasa, an empty box to be filled with the pieces of knowledge coming from outside. Conversely, the '**innateness view**' is closely related to **nativism** in which it is held that no knowledge comes from outside; rather, the source of all human knowledge is the 'inside'. That is, the proponents of the innateness hypothesis would suggest that humans are born with an innate knowledge, including linguistic knowledge. Thus, environmental factors have no role to play in generating knowledge. It needs to be clarified, however, that even hard-line nativists do not categorically rule out the role of experience and environment in the incremental process of developing knowledge. They simply avow that experience and the outside world

do not generate new knowledge, but they are crucial to triggering the knowledge with which we are innately bestowed. The differences of opinion between the proponents of nativism and empiricism have led to the so-called '**nature-nurture**' **controversy**, with nativists emphasising the 'nature' side and empiricists supporting the 'nurture' side of the line.

The Behaviouristic Theory

When talking about behaviourism, almost inevitably, one has to refer to B.F. Skinner's 'Verbal Behaviour' in which it is held that language is not a mental phenomenon; it is behaviour. Like any other forms of human behaviour, it is learnt by a mechanical process of habit-formation. However, it is now widely accepted that the behaviouristic approach cannot account for all the known facts of language acquisition because it suffers from a number of inadequacies.

First of all, the basic view of language is no longer acceptable. Language is not merely 'verbal behaviour'. Underlying actual behaviour, there is a complex system of rules. These rules enable speakers to create and understand an infinite number

of sentences most of which they have never encountered before.

Second, what children learn is competence (the abstract knowledge), but this not what they are exposed to; they are exposed to performance or the concrete behaviour. This cannot be explained by habit-formation.

Third, rules are often reflected very indirectly in the surface structure of the speech; deep relations cannot be explained by the behaviouristic approach.

Fourth, first language learning is a complex task. Yet, it occurs with exceptional speed, which cannot be accounted for by habit formation.

Finally, although children are exposed to different actual speed, they arrive at the same underlying rules, something that is impossible within the behaviouristic framework.

The Innateness View

The above-mentioned inadequacies of the behaviouristic view to FLA have led some people to believe that children are born with an innate capacity for acquiring language, referred to as 'LAD' by some authorities. Of course William Littlewood (1984) cogently argues that the term 'LAD' has

now lost a lot of its currency. However, the basic notion that children possess an innate ability to acquire language is hardly questionable. What is debatable is whether or not there is actually a device like LAD.

Closely related to the innateness view to FLA is nativism in philosophy the roots of which can be traced back to the times of Plato or even much earlier. Psammeticus, an Egyptian Pharaoh during the 7th century BC, believed language was inborn, and that children isolated from birth from any linguistic influence would develop the language they had been born with. He isolated two children, who were reported to have spoken a few words of Phrygian, a variety of language of present day Turkey. Psammeticus believed that this was the first or original language. Similarly, Plato asserted that one either knows something or does not. If they know something, then it doesn't make sense to say they learn it. If, on the other hand, they do not know something, then they do not know what they are looking for. And, unless they know what they are looking for, they will never find anything. In either case, therefore, whether one already knows something or does not, learning new things will be

impossible. This is commonly referred to as ‘Plato’s Problem’. It is in response to this problem that nativists propose a natural and innate predisposition in children for language acquisition.

Fodor’s Theory

One of the more extreme and conceptually very challenging proponents of individualism and cognitivism applied to the problem of language learning is Jerry Fodor, who argues that the acquisition of language requires an innate ‘language of thought’ which contains a complete set of representations of anything a person can ever learn, including language. According to Fodor, the child learns language by making hypotheses in the ‘**language of thought**’ and tests them against the language spoken around him/her. Thus, learning is seen as a translation from the ‘language of thought’ to the language of the child’s community. Fodor’s theory is a **computational** theory of the mind. According to Fodor, the ‘language of thought’ is innate and consists of a body of information in which items are deductively related to each other, or in Fodor’s terminology, they are related to each other by operations and computations. Talking about

the origin of the intrinsic representational system of the language of thought, Fodor argues that it cannot be learnt because this would require another language of thought which in turn requires another language of thought, and so on, in an infinite regress. So, it has to be innately known, or as Fodor puts it, it is a biological necessity.

In characterizing the nature of the framework, or unlearned givens from which learning has to start, that is, the language of thought, Fodor is following the footsteps of Plato but without adopting Plato's metaphysics. Instead, the framework is characterized in terms of modern linguistics and computational theory.

Fodor's account of FLA, nonetheless, faces a number of criticisms. The first criticism raised against his theory is a methodological one. His theory is not an explanatory one. It cannot be empirically tested, but is rather a conceptual analysis of what learning, thinking, and so on entail. The second challenge concerns the idea that individual experience adds nothing essential to the language of thought, but only has the role of 'triggering' or 'selecting' and confirming the relevant hypotheses. This 'innateness' of the language of thought

consequently rules out the ontogenetic development of higher mental processes such as problem solving and language acquisition. The third counter-argument opposes the idea that FLA is a matter of translating from the language of thought to the language in question. Translating from one natural language to another is, according to Fodor, possible because of shared semantic representations, the language of thought. This cannot hold for translating between the language of thought and the first natural language because there is no shared representational system. This would lead to an infinite regress of internal representations which Fodor rightly wants to avoid.

Wittgenstein's Theory

A critique as well as an alternative approach to Fodor-type theories of language learning can be found in the philosophy of the later Wittgenstein. In his "Philosophical Investigations", Wittgenstein shows what is wrong with the Fodor-type conceptions of language learning.

According to Wittgenstein, learning is accomplished by **social training**. The child learns the language by being **domesticated**, that is, by

having its natural reactions and behaviours shaped in accordance with sociolinguistic activities and not translating from an innate language of thought. These claims suggest that the two fundamental problems of learning (productivity and framework) can be solved without the assumptions of individualism and cognitivism.

Domestication Model

Erneling (1993) believes that Wittgenstein does not propose any theory of language acquisition. She holds that he only criticizes Fodor-type theories. Later, she proposes a model of her own based on Wittgenstein's reconceptualization of what language learning involves. She calls it the 'Domestication Model' to emphasise that learning a first language is a matter of social training, where the child's natural behaviour and reactions are shaped by sociolinguistic interaction and training. In this new model, the framework of learning does not consist of innate or acquired cognitive-linguistic structures, but of a combination of the child's natural behaviour, sociolinguistic interaction, and the language spoken around him/her; thus involving other things than the individual's mind.

Much like Wittgenstein, Erneling takes the child's behaviour as well as language to be fundamentally productive. It is through training or domestication that this productivity is limited, making room for meaningful language and communication.

The Interactionist View

According to the interactionist view children are active learners. However, their learning is very much influenced by the quality of interaction and the nature of the environment in which learning simultaneously takes place (Thao Le, 1997). While Chomsky tends to over-focus on the mechanistic structure of language (that is, syntax over semantics), interactionists emphasise the significance of meaning and use that make what language is. Language is to discover the power of language in human interaction.

Piaget's Theory

To Jean Piaget (1896 – 1980), to know something means to act on that thing, with the action being either physical or mental, or both. First, children gain physical experience, but as they gain

more direct physical knowing, they also mature internally and they become able to produce mental images and symbols (words, mathematical figures) that represent objects and relationships. So to Piaget, knowledge is a process or repertoire of actions rather than inventory of stored information, and learning is a process of adapting to one's environment.

To answer 'what factors or forces determine how this adaptation – organization will operate in a given child's development?', Piaget proposes four underlying causal facts :

1. Heredity (internal maturation),
2. Physical experience with the world of objects,
3. Social transmission (education), and
4. Equilibrium

According to Piaget, the last force is the one that maintains a balance among the other three, fitting the maturational, direct experience, and social transmission influences together harmoniously. Piaget's developmental theory recognizes the following four levels of development:

1. the sensory-motor period (from birth to age two)
2. the pre-operational thought period (2-7)
3. the concrete operations period (7-11)
4. the formal operations period (11-15)

Piaget accounts for language acquisition in the same vein. When acquiring their first language, children first gain a physical sensory experience of the world around them, but as they mature physically, they also mature internally and develop the ability to form a mental image of the objects they have already experienced so that without physically sensing an object, they can envisage the object in their minds upon hearing the word which they have associated with that object. They can also use words to activate and recall the mental images they have internalised when they speak.

Vygotsky's Theory

Vygotsky was sincerely dedicated to and profoundly influenced by the Marxist social philosophy and the conviction that psychological development was intimately linked to the tenets of that psychology. So, his theory of development pictures children engaging in activities, and from this engagement, constructing the contents of their minds. Thus, thinking does not initially create action; instead, action creates thought. Vygotsky assumes four stages in speech development.

In the first stage (the primitive stage), which is characterised by non-intellectual speech functions, children produce: 1. sounds representing emotional release (cooing and babbling), 2. sounds that can be interpreted as ‘social reactions’ to other people’s voices and appearance, and 3. words that are substitutes for objects and desires and are learnt by conditioning.

In the second stage (naïve psychological stage), children discover that words can have a symbolic function, and they display this discovery by frequently asking what things are called. As a result, their vocabulary increases at a great rate.

In the third stage the ‘egocentric speech’ develops, which takes the form of a running monologue that accompanies the child’s activities, whether the child works alone or besides others. It requires no response because it is not directed at anyone.

In the fourth stage (the ‘ingrowth stage’), children learn to manipulate language in their heads in the form of soundless speech.

Vygotsky also identifies the following stages in thought development:

1. thinking of things in unorganised heaps;

2. thinking of things in complexes
3. thinking of things by true concepts

What all these boil down to is that although ‘non-conceptual speech’ and ‘non-verbal thought’ develop independently from one another, they eventually merge and form ‘verbal thought’. So, both Piaget and Vygotsky postulate that language emerges as a result of the child’s acting on the world around him/her. The two views, nevertheless, contrast one another in that for Piaget the child becomes symbolic with language primarily through interaction with the ‘physical world of objects’ as opposed to Vygotsky’s ‘social world of people’.

Foster’s View

Foster adopts a **modular approach** to language acquisition in which the development of each component proceeds along a different path, and requires a different kind of explanation. This is what is meant by the term ‘modular’. According to Foster, infants have a ‘preference for faces’ and a ‘preference for voices’ before they begin their early perception of speech sounds. They are attracted to people and attend to them both aurally and visually as a necessary pre-requisite for communication. It is

obvious that children who because of some disorders such as blindness, deafness, or autism are unable to attend to other humans with one or more of their senses have very basic deficits to overcome for successful communication. So, she accounts for language development by resorting to the concepts of ‘subjectivity’, ‘primary intersubjectivity’, and ‘secondary intersubjectivity’, the explanation of which would not fit the scope of the present paper.

Dan Slobin’s Approach

Preferring not to credit children with innate linguistic knowledge, as Chomsky does, Dan Slobin argues for a ‘Language Making Capacity’ (LMC) consisting of a series of ‘**operating principles**’ (strategies) which exist prior to the child’s experience with language. These strategies allow children to process the data they encounter and gradually extract generalisations. According to Slobin, the LMC constructs a preliminary basic child grammar that guides the production of meaningful, structured utterances.

UG – Instance Theory

This theory, which was originally proposed by John Truscott (1998) to account for second language acquisition but can also be applied to FLA, is in fact a combination of the ‘instance theory’ in psychology and the UG theory in linguistics. **Instance theory** is an experienced-based theory that de-emphasises the role of abstract principles in knowledge and its acquisition and use, focusing instead on the storage and retrieval of specific experiences, or instances. UG, on the other hand, emphasises the apriori existence of abstract principles over experienced-based learning. Instance theory explains the variability in the use of language by different speakers of a given language as well as speakers of different languages. According to the theory, the variation in the use of language is caused by the different experiences individuals have. At the same time, UG explains the uniformity of language acquisition. In the combined UG – Instance theory, the invariant aspects of the UG are maintained and variability is allowed in exactly the same areas as in standard theories, but variation occurs in pools of stored instances, not in abstract parameter values. Truscott claims that this approach can be

productively applied to various problems in language learning research, including input to learners, undoing of errors during the learning process, transfer and fossilisation, and the non-discrete character of learning.

Summary and Conclusion

This chapter was a sketch of some of the theories of FLA. The behaviouristic view emphasises, as it was seen, the *nurture* side, while the nativist approach stresses the *nature* side of the *nature/nurture* spectrum. What is obvious, of course, is that none of these two extremes alone can explain all the known facts of FLA. At the same time, there are obviously germs of truth in both theories so that none of them can be categorically refuted. There are, of course, a number of more moderate theories taking the middle ground.

Nevertheless, the main question in all modern studies of child language acquisition involves finding out what in human language is inborn, innate, hard-wired into the infant's brain structure, and what is learnt through experience. Although this question has not been answered to anyone's complete satisfaction, it seems clear that the basic

capacity to learn language is innate, while the particular form/meaning connections of individual languages are acquired through prolonged exposure to a specific speech community.

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